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MART AND MANSION:

A Tale of Struggle and Rest.

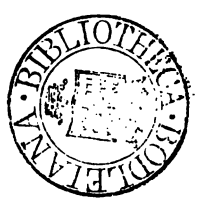
BY

PHILIP MASSINGER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

A meaning lies
Within me hidden;
But joy may rise,
Or grief unbidden.



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MART AND MANSION.

CHAPTER I.

TALK.

Verum animo satis hæc vestigia parva sagaci
Sunt per quæ possis cognoscere cetera tute.
LUCR.

IT has always been a flaw in our friend Mrs. Grundy's character, that she is so fond of tittling and tattling; and her neighbours wouldn't always approve what she says; and yet, why should she not feel a loving interest in her neighbours' affairs? In small communities, little villages, country towns, and the inevitable cliques of a large society, a loving interest has its recognised place.

In Newstel there were maiden ladies and

widows; there was a tea hour, and there was gossip.

What more could be needed for Mrs. Pritchers's enjoyment this evening? The labours of her day were ended, her lodgers' bills were paid, the house was cleared up, and the next door neighbour, Mrs. Rhodes, had come in for a cup of tea. This was to meet her niece Jane, who was on a visit from the country. John, who "was so gentleman-like, you know," had been invited to form a fourth.

The tea-kettle was hissing and fizzing on the hob. Mrs. Pritchers always liked to hear it sing. The china tea-pot (she could never a-bear the metal ones) was keeping warm on the hob, the round table was drawn up close to the fire, and the four people were as happy as any four people in Newstel.

Miss Jane was a smiling, well-grown country lass of sixteen, with a good open

countenance, and hands accustomed to the dairy. She seemed very glad to get a glimpse of the great town, where everybody was rich and happy; though her pleasure on this score was tempered by a certain awe of her aunt. Mrs. Pritchers, in fact, even now found it her duty to reprove her. She had just refilled her niece's cup. What, then, was her horror at seeing a quantity of scalding tea fly straight into Mr. Bowyer's face? Jane, who had in awkward politeness risen to take the cup from her aunt, had stumbled over Mrs. Rhodes's foot. John was nearly blinded!

The aunt looked thunder. Jane sat down mildly enough, prepared for a severe reprimand on the subject of ungainly manners, when Bowyer managed to restore the general good temper. The mishap was of no importance, he said; was caused, in fact, by his own silly way of sitting obliquely in a chair. And he certainly had a very curious

way of seating himself, as if the chair-back were always incommoding him.

So his excuse was accepted, and Mrs. Rhodes observed,—

"There, now! you'll have got that habit of yours, Mr. Bowyer, sir, from some old-fashioned chair that has come down to you."

"How do you mean, m'm?" he replied.

"Why, when I was a girl, you know, and things *were* things, they used to make real arm-chairs, and not feather-beds, that you lose yourself in! People used to sit just as you 're doing now."

"Well, now I think of it, my old grandmother had such a chair, which I suppose taught me that bad habit."

"Don't call it bad, Mr. Bowyer," interrupted the hostess. "Nothing old is bad."

Mrs. Rhodes took out her knitting, and began to knit over her tea.

"And pray," the latter said, "who was

your grandmother? Do you mean old Nancy, that you talk so much about?"

"To be sure I do," he replied, warmly, indignant at her tiresome curiosity.

"Well, what I always tell him," Mrs. Pritchers remarked, "is, that that woman is no more dead than I am. But *she* was no relation of his, bless you."

"She took care of me when young," he said; "which is more than many relations do."

"Oh! *she'll* turn up again," Mrs. Rhodes observed, somewhat tartly.

Bowyer, though he did not like her tone, devoutly hoped she might be right.

The tea-things were now removed, and the four seated themselves cosily round the fire. The autumn evening made the latter very comfortable. Mrs. Pritchers always enjoyed the blaze, and to-night she left the shutters open, and let the light stream out into the street.

"Talking of turning up," she said, when they were snugly seated, "our Jane here tells a queer story. Don't you, Jane?"

It was Mrs. Pritchers's way never to let her niece speak for herself. The latter replied, as she was expected to do, in the affirmative.

"She says that, in her village of Shelford, when poor Lucy Clifford was buried, two people had a long talk with the parson."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Rhodes, slowly drawling out each syllable. "In-deed!"

"Yes. There was an old woman — but you don't remember very well, do you, Jane, love, for you was only ten then?"

"No, aunt."

The latter admission might have weakened Jane's evidence in a strict court. Here, however, it only strengthened, as it was intended to do, Mrs. Pritchers's authority.

"That would be old Nancy," Mrs. Rhodes said.

"And the other was a demure-looking chap, and I think I know who it was." Here Mrs. Pritchers winked both her eyes very significantly, and held up her finger.

"Whew!" said Mrs. Rhodes; "what a world we live in!"

Bowyer wondered what it was all about. The ladies noticed his astonishment, and began to think their behaviour was not very courteous. Meanwhile a dark shadow crossed the window. It was Hockster, the other lodger.

Mrs. Rhodes raised her hands in alarm.

"Good gracious me!" she exclaimed.

It was only the lodger, the hostess told her.

"Oh!" she thought, "but he's a young man who can hear through the wall." Her spirits were rather "damped."

"A very hard-working young man!" said the hostess, in the tone of a severe judge. "I wonder whether the lawyer will be

Mayor or not." This was for Bowyer's edification.

"They say Mr. Guiltspun is very anxious for the post," observed the latter.

"Anxious for the post!" replide one of the ladies. "I should rather think so. One of them would make money by it."

Whether this was considered a proper or only a probable motive for seeking the honours alluded to, did not appear.

"Indeed!" said Bowyer. "I thought it always entailed expense."

"That depends," Mrs. Rhodes said. "I 've known those who have given a little, and got a deal with their grandeur. It has brought them a settled position like, and made their creditors hang back."

"But surely neither of them will want such help?" Bowyer said.

"It 's not for me to say! Oh! dear no. But people that know say that it 's lucky for one of them that he has just had a

fortune left him, or is going to have one left him, or something."

"Do they indeed?" said Mrs. Pritchers. "I wish they would leave it me instead."

"Fie! Mrs. Pritchers, m'm, Fie! So well off as your husband left you," said the neighbour.

That lady simply observed,—

"There 's no one so rich, but he could do with a bit more."

The conversation was getting personal, and the hostess reached out some more creature comforts, under the influence of which the ladies' tongues rattled more freely than ever.

"Where 's Susan?" suddenly asked Mrs. Rhodes.

"She always goes home to Rossleigh village at the 'Wakes'!"

"I wonder you let her go. She 'll be making a match of it soon."

"No, her heart 's elsewhere, as they say. And the Squire—"

"Ah! who is he?"

"Squire Langhome. Oh! he's a born gentleman. He takes an interest in young people and their ways. He has a heart for something besides himself."

"I can't do with your morose old men," said Mrs. Rhodes.

"Nor young ones either, I suppose," said Bowyer.

"Nor young ones either," Mrs. Rhodes continued. "I don't know how it is, but somehow when I was your age, Mr. Bowyer, sir, people all seemed better than they are now, you know."

"Indeed."

"I'm sure there's no more respectable woman than I am."

"Certainly not," Bowyer said, eyeing the well filled tumbler.

"I meant respectful. A more respectful woman than I am, there is none. 'Honour to whom honour,' says I. But *I* can't

respect people as I used to do when a girl."

"Perhaps that was because you was young then," said Mrs. Pritchers; "and they were a good deal older than you."

"That 's not it, m'm; that 's not it. No; people used to have more about them *worth* respecting. Fine old people with a pedigree, are what I like. Not folks that get rich in a year or two, no one knows how."

"Ah! you see you have lived in the country a longish time. People in towns have to get on as they can."

Mrs. Rhodes replenished her glass, and continued,—

"Now, a town for instance. What a conglomeration it is of men and mud and bricks! I often think that the houses are like clothes, and the people cut them to their tastes. I often think—"

Bowyer was afraid of a philosophical dis-

cussion. He remembered that he had business which required finishing that night.

Jane had fallen asleep. He bade affectionate farewell to the other two ladies. When he had gone, one of them said,—

"A nice young man that!"

The other agreed with the remark.

CHAPTER II.

A POLITICAL MEETING.

They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs;
They 'll talk o' patronage an' priests,
Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation 's comin',
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.

BURNS.

The same men perform domestic and public duties; an interest in politics makes them none the worse for their ordinary callings.

PERICLES.

ABOUT the time of Mrs. Pritchers's evening-party, Stockbridge, the member for Tindwich, went through a trying ordeal. But he would have been sorry to admit that it was trying at all. In his love for mankind at large, he was ready to undertake a good deal more than that. He had often ad-

dressed assemblies of his constituency before, and had seldom been rudely received. And he hadn't any real fears about the meeting he was just going to address.

And yet, if we must admit the truth, there was one circumstance which did cause him some misgiving. The fact was, that the Parliament had done that session nothing at all. Everybody knew that there were thousands of abuses needing remedy, and thousands of useful measures which ought to have been passed. Nor did any one doubt that the House of Commons was the right body to apply to. But all that had been done amounted to nothing. A few arguments had been urged on abstract subjects, which no one could understand; a few measures had been passed about ecclesiastical questions, about which everybody was indifferent; a few brawls had occurred, and the House had now and then resembled a "jerry-shop."

The *Newstel Chronicle* had been exceedingly indignant about "incompetence in head-quarters"; and there were not a few persons who thought that Tindwich would show its true colours on this occasion, and ask its Member what he meant by eating the nation's bread and not doing its work.

Mr. Stockbridge, however, had no real fears about his constituents. He had only some slight misgivings; and these did not entirely result from thoughts about Parliament. No; he had had no fears even when he made his maiden speech, and forgot to address the Speaker. Even then he had not faltered an instant. He was always collected. If his house had been falling over his head, he would only have demanded the meaning of its insolence. He was quite ready for this paltry meeting of voters.

But those slight misgivings of his came from something unconnected with a cool

head. He had had curious thoughts of late, curious to him, that is; for he was now about forty, and had determined to make politics the business of his life. In town he divided his time between the House and the Club. The rest of his time he spent at Tindwich among his constituents. His handsome person, winning address, agreeable conversation, and charming manners made him no less welcome in a drawing-room than his accurate scholarship rendered him a favourite with the learned. But he had begun of late to doubt whether a solitary life really conduced to the pursuit of politics. The latter was, of course, to be the business of his life. But he had felt more and more the need of some sympathy in his calling. Ever since his last visit to Rossleigh, a sweet face had kept haunting him, and a gentle voice had been ringing in his ear.

These diversions considerably interfered

with his political aspirations. Despise the easy work before him to-day as he might, he had not that self-command which springs from undivided resolution.

The time of meeting was twelve at noon. The large brick hall would hold a fair proportion of voters. The Member's well-known form appeared wrapped up in an imposing light top-coat. He came on the platform in company with several officials, and amid a clapping of hands.

In a public meeting, Stockbridge had the voice of a lion. At his first election, he had literally roared the voters down, and they had called him the "Lion." The name had clung to him afterwards.

The preliminaries of the meeting over, the Member began his speech. Various interruptions unfortunately occurred from time to time. Some persons were discontented, others were anxious to make a noise, while, most unfortunately, not a few people

thought themselves wags. But, listen! the member has begun his speech.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it is true that the actual business of the Session has not any very tangible results to show for itself. (A voice, What have you done?) But that is partly deceptive, more having been really accomplished than at first sight appears (Oh! Oh!); and, so far as any fault does exist, it is entirely to be attributed to the opposite side. (Of course!) Gentlemen, do not mistake me. Your Member, and those with whom he has the good fortune to act, have done their duty. (Hear!) Many of them have proposed beneficial measures; and, when really important business was being done, very few indeed were out of their places. (Hear! Hear! He 's one of 'em.) I will review the measures, such as they have been, of the past few months.

[Here a violent interruption occurred at

the lower end of the hall, and two unoffending shopkeepers were violently ejected.]

"I was saying, when those two persons interrupted me, that I would, with your permission, Sir, just take a retrospect of our late toils. Our measures have been of several kinds. (Surely not!) They have been directed to the improvement of the labouring classes, the repression of privileges and monopolies (They only ought to!), and, I may boldly say, have had regard to the amelioration of mankind at large.

[At this point several persons caused great annoyance by loud coughing.]

"Measures which regard the welfare of the labouring classes are necessarily matters of interest to you. A large, and rapidly increasing commercial centre, such as the one which I have the honour to represent, keeps a watch, yes, Sir, a very jealous watch (A voice, Where's th' main-spring, lad?) upon those measures which concern itself,

and in which, I may say, its own prosperity is involved. Now, here I must admit that I think the Legislature has done its duty. You will remember that we have regulated the hours of labour, seen that no hindrances are put in the way of education, given a very full and ample discussion to the subject of wages (All talk!), and asked several important questions of the Speaker. (Loud laughter.) And, while I am upon this subject, I may mention a matter which is of great interest to me, and which will, I am sure, find a deep response in the breast of every man, and of every Englishman. I allude to our regard, I may call it an anxious longing, nay, a real yearning, for the preservation of all life by land and sea. (Sensation.) You know that questions of that kind always receive a most impartial and candid consideration from the British House of Commons. The British House of Commons, Sir (the Member spoke enthusias-

tically), the British House of Commons, Sir, is composed of gentlemen who have no selfish interests of their own, no narrow views, no thoughtless prejudices; of gentlemen who despise rank and influence, who loathe money, and whose sole ambition it is to do good in the world. Therefore I say that they have only done what might have been expected of them in the reception they have given to the proposals to which I allude. They have given them a full discussion, looked at them from every point of view, and would have passed on those subjects a very trenchant Act but for stress of business. (Hear!) Henceforth, if life is needlessly sacrificed by sea or land, people will have themselves to blame for losing their lives.

[Considerable interruption was here caused by a pale, stout man, who rose and described himself as a teetotaller; but, his hat being pulled over his face, the honourable Member proceeded.]

"Again, we have done many things to mitigate or abolish privilege. I will not go into the history of monopolies. There were times when almost every article you use was dispensed by some person, who, of course, received great profit for himself. Even such a small matter as the salt on your breakfast-tables could not at one time be obtained without application, directly or indirectly, to some particular personage. But we have changed all that. An individual now-a-days is felt to exist not only in his individual capacity, but as an integer in a great State. He enjoys his wealth, it is true, but he also shares it with the State for the sake of the protection this affords. Our Government, Sir, does not underrate the importance of the State as such. Therefore we have bought up the Telegraphs. We are going to buy up the Railways, and we shall finish (It 's time, lad!) by buying up the land. But honest industry—mark me, gentlemen, *honest*

industry!—is fully protected by such measures as the Laws about Patents, which are now sure to enrich the real inventors. We have also taken care that the Laws about Copyright are made stricter. Pirated editions of books are quite unknown. Measures with a wider—"

["The Mayor will now sing a song!" "Turn him out!" "Order!" There was immense uproar. The confusion was increased by some malicious person, who threw from a gallery large quantities of pepper. The sneezing and shouting lasted some minutes, during which the honourable Member with difficulty maintained his composure.]

"I was saying, you will remember, that we have not forgotten mankind at large in what we have done. I should like to have spent a full hour in explaining my meaning. But I perceive that some of you are wearied with your arduous labours. Indeed, gentlemen, I sympathize with you. It is no

slight labour to think and toil for the public good. Therefore I beg to thank you for your very kind attention and forbearance this morning. With greater courtesy it was never my lot to meet." (Loud cheers and some hisses.)

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Mayor for his able conduct of the meeting. Stockbridge, it must be owned, thought himself badly treated. But ingratitude was certain to be found in large bodies of men, and he would have been tolerably content had it not been for that aching void in his soul. The ache became worse, curiously enough, when the meeting was over. He who had so far given up his life to political science, who was ready, if need were, to lay it down in that holy cause, abandoned by friends, and the laughing-stock of fools who had no idea of private sacrifice at all, he, who was living for an idea, felt the need of sympathy and encouragement.

One loving face, he was sure, would help him to achieve the purpose of his life. But was her ideal the same as his? Was not hers more spiritual, higher and nobler?

He could try. *Solvitur ambulando.*

He could offer her his wealth and powers, laying all that he had at her feet. He was, he felt sure, capable of worshipping some pure being enthroned above the paltry struggles of humanity. What to his loved one were desire of place and greed of money? If she would take him as he was, how strong he would be to achieve in the strength of her approval! Would that heaven might grant success to his suit!

He would go that very day. He would start at once, and present himself before Miss Langholme. If she rejected his appeal —well, he would only be as miserable as he was at present. So he made all haste for his intended journey.

CHAPTER III.

AN INTERVIEW.

Take Nature's path and mad opinion leave.
POPE.

STOCKBRIDGE was a man who, having formed a resolution, acted up to it at once. He therefore snatched his hat, and, seizing on the first conveyance he could find, took the train for Newstel.

But great was his rage and annoyance to find that there would be no coach that evening. He had no desire to wait another day. But there was no help for it, and he must take the first coach next morning.

Even as it was, he had not allowed himself sufficient time for thinking about his present action, or the probable fate in store for him. He hardly dared think about what

he was doing at all. It was far more trying than addressing the electors of Tindwich.

But he has left the coach now. He is hurrying up the hill, without a glance on either side, violently swinging his arms about, as if he were struggling with an unseen enemy. Unconsciously he begins to whistle an air. But even that sounds as if it proceeded from some desperate inward effort.

Suddenly he is arrested by the very music he is making so mechanically. Where had he picked it up?

Oh! He remembered now. Yes, he had composed that air himself years ago. Things we have done and made ourselves, stick to us with a close affection, and make their appearances at odd moments. And he could remember the very place where he had composed that air.

It was under a far off eastern sky. He could see it all again. Overhead was the

deep unsullied blue. From the western horizon to the middle of the arch above, dart up thick lines of rosy red, gradually shading away and fading into the blue. The air is quite still. From half a mile's distance comes the shrill cry of the sailor urging on his two-sailed boat. Each palm-tree in the plain below stands out distinct in the clear atmosphere.

Yes! he was whistling that little tune at Jaffa sixteen years ago. He saw it again with its tombs and turbaned Mahomedans, the latter lounging about with their long pipes. He could count twenty domes. There was the mosque; the upper buildings were shining in sunlight like a face bathed in glory, and there were the two palms that seemed to protect the town. And now he was walking through the narrow streets, and the men were talking at their house-doors.

There was no mistake about it. He was

sure that he heard a foreign language. And there were certainly black, swarthy faces staring at him.

He was startled. "Where am I?" he exclaimed aloud.

But the gipsies only laughed at him, as they were quietly sitting by the camp fire over the morning meal, close to the Lodge at Rossleigh. The smell was very savoury. "How have the contents been obtained?" he thought.

You see, gentle reader, that he would think of anything rather than the business before him.

However, he was now at Rossleigh. His heart beat fast as he looked up at its old tower and ivy-covered walls. The diamond windows seemed to be peering inquisitively on his visit. The rhododendrons and geraniums were still very pretty. But the dark-green and brown of the foliage, and the fallen leaves, had a gloomy appearance.

He is at the front door now. If he could have seen the gardener, or any body about! But there was no one to give him welcome. His hand is a long time ringing that bell. It certainly was a trying business he had come about! How his heart was beating! Strong, brave man that he was, he was afraid of something or other now, but scarcely knew what it was. But it was time to ring.

Mr. Langholme was at home, but very busy with his papers. He was not quite as well, the maid informed him, as he had been. "But then you know, sir, he is getting into years," she remarked, simply.

Langholme came down to welcome him, and expressed his great pleasure at the unexpected visit. Just then, he said, he was sorely pressed by difficult business, in which no stranger could as yet help. And he raised his hand to his head. But some time he might ask Stockbridge's advice on

the subject. He hoped he would remain some time.

It was with Miss Langholm, said the latter, that *his* business was concerned. He had to repeat his words, and even then the old man did not seem to comprehend him. Langholme was greatly altered since Stockbridge had last seen him. His hair was greyer. His step faltered. His voice sounded weak, and his expression was weary and downcast.

Stockbridge had scarcely courage to tell him a second time that he wished to see his daughter. That failing old man surely needed some support. But, then, could not he be a support to him ? Still, the words came out with a choking sensation in the throat.

But, to his surprise, Langholme expressed neither pleasure nor displeasure. He only opened his eyes to their utmost width. The maid would call Miss Mary, he said. And the old man hurried off to his papers again.

"Age makes the feelings blunter," Stockbridge thought, with something of pity for one who was prematurely old.

He had to sit a long time by himself in that room. It seemed a very long time indeed. His resolution almost gave way under the questionings and cross-questionings that kept presenting themselves. Miss Langholme would be angry at his rashness. She would order him out of her sight, asking him why he had come to annoy her at a time when her father needed continuous attention. Or she would coldly reject his suit, and inwardly laugh at his lost labour. That would be worse still.

Oh! that he were addressing the noisy crowd again! The worst insults would be more endurable than this. The suspense was becoming intolerable. He began to pace the room with large strides.

The door gently opened. Mary was there. She had been transplanting some rose-trees.

Her cheeks were ruddy with health, her thick auburn hair waved wantonly over her shoulders, her eyes still seemed full of birds and flowers, her mouth was dimpling with the anticipated pleasure of seeing her father's visitor. She would some time, perhaps, make some one happier than all the poor people whom she had rendered happy. And they were many.

"Oh, Mr. Stockbridge," she said, holding out her hand, "how very kind of you to come and see my dear father. He has been so unwell. I should like your opinion about him."

"He certainly looks far from well, Miss Langholme. But he is fortunate in having about him one who looks after him as well as you do."

"Surely, sir, you are not a gentleman of compliments," she said, looking somewhat uneasy. "Will you be pleased to take a glass of wine before luncheon?"

"No" (altering his chair for one nearer

Miss Langholme); "it remains with yourself how long I stop here."

There was no reply, but Mary's head drooped slightly. The young lady just then would have formed a graceful model for a statue of Attention. She was evidently expecting something further. But, if her form was statuesque, she had a human heart throbbing beneath its grace and beauty. Even as she sat there silently she had about her a gentle look of love, as if she had never willingly injured a person in her life. Perhaps Stockbridge felt this, for he continued, in a subdued, and somewhat desponding tone,—

"Miss Langholme, for years I have felt a great respect for your character, and watched your development in every beauty and virtue. I am now, I fear, becoming seared and spoiled by a too engrossing love for the pursuit of politics. I know you to be indifferent about wealth—"

Not quite so indifferent as he thought her. But he did not know of the little difficulty entangling her father's affairs, and her face told no tales. She was thinking too deeply just then.

"As the world counts wealth, I am wealthy, and I would gladly fling it all at your feet if—"

"Oh sir, it cannot be. I too respect you. I honour your self-denial and industry. I admire your great abilities. I thank you for your good opinion. But it can never be."

"Why, Mary?"

This was the first time he had called her by her Christian name. He could not help it.

"Why, Mary?" he said.

"It is impossible, sir."

"But look at it in this way. Of course, my qualities and powers are poor in comparison with those of many who are likely to become your suitors. I fully admit that."

Mary only shook her head.

"But perhaps my position in Parliament, my connexion with literary societies, my relationship with Lord Tindwich, who, you know, is my uncle, might bring you an influence which would help you in your charitable schemes."

Again she shook her head, somewhat sadly.

"Mary, Mary," he said, desperately, seizing her hand, "do not say nay! Just think what you can make of me! I could, perhaps, help you a little; but my whole happiness is in your hands."

"Dear Mr. Stockbridge," she said, "it is quite impossible. I esteem you highly as my father's friend; I revere you as one who resolutely carries out a lofty purpose; but I cannot help you in that purpose. I do not think it will accomplish what you expect from it; and I cannot become the life-long companion of it."

"I am afraid you are sparing my feelings too much," he replied. "You do not wish to wound me. But what is it that you see wrong in me? Is it not a mere fault of manner, an undue enthusiasm, a brusqueness, or a seeming want of sympathy, is it not this which you dislike rather than any inward purpose?"

He waited for a short time; then, as if he were violently struggling with something, he suddenly exclaimed,—

"No; I can't give it up!"

An embarrassed silence ensued. At length Mary spoke, in her calm, ringing voice.

"It is no mannerism that I blame in you, sir. Your brusqueness I like. But your purpose is, as you say, a part of you, and I couldn't bear that you should give it up on my account."

He seemed to hesitate, as if he were balancing something in his mind; then he said, abruptly,—

"I would go to the world's end for you."

"It cannot be, sir," she replied. "I too have a purpose. Please spare me any more."

Nothing further could be said. The offer had been made and declined. Stockbridge almost expected this result. But Mary was certainly a strange girl. Here were offered her thousands a year, a large sphere of usefulness, and a brave, manly husband, who might even become one of the nobles of the land. Was it a mere piece of waywardness that made her refuse his suit? She was not a wayward girl. Probably there was a good reason for what she did. And she had taken care not to pain his feelings. She had declined his offer as gently as she could, and had left him in the assurance that she loved him with a sisterly affection. But perhaps that did not make him a bit happier.

The hurried luncheon, which soon fol-

lowed, was painful to every one. Miss Langholme and Stockbridge had their own subjects of thought, and Mr. Langholme was engrossed with his private affairs. Even John, who was waiting, looked as if he had rubbed his eyes with an onion.

Stockbridge left as soon as the meal was over. When he had gone, Mary locked herself in her room, and sank on the floor in a flood of tears.

Have you ever, reader, watched for any length of time the waves hurling themselves against a granite cliff? How they foam and swell, retire and return, shower themselves in eddies of spray, dash on in concentrated mass, approach singly; then there is a lull and an angrier charge than ever, the roar below is as of people contending for the mastery, the mud surges up, and the waters expend themselves in a thousand forms of fury. But the cliff stands as it has

stood a thousand years. It laughs at the puny efforts of the battling waves.

Such is the force of a great resolution. Its force, in this respect unlike that of the rock, may be greatest when its keeping costs the greatest pain. Mary knew that she was right, and nothing would have broken her resolution.

CHAPTER IV.

BOWYER AND JONAS.

The busy hum of men.

MILTON.

OF late Bowyer had been deeply pondering various subjects. He was always pondering, so that this was not wonderful. But some of these ponderings had nothing to do with all his writing. He was no longer, as Mrs. Pritchers termed it, always "a-bendin' over them books."

A number of chisels and knives lay upon his table. You would have liked just then to peep in at his occupations. Tools were scattered about in all sorts of confusion. Hammers, gimlets, adzes, and planes met in close accord with nails and odd bits of wood. At his table was fixed a real carpenter's vice.

Mrs. Pritchers, it must be owned, looked with suspicion on this instrument of torturing scrapings.

What was the meaning of all this hammering? It could not be for diversion. Some people cut and wound bits of wood just for fun, when they are tired and jaded with the labours of the day. Bowyer would never have done that. He never liked to waste his efforts in what he called "purposeless industry." Even when he roamed on his solitary excursions, he often made them useful by quaint reflections. The creaking and filing, now always going on, was not for amusement.

Still less was it for hidden lessons of patience, industry, humility, and the like. He thought such lessons need not be taught by unnecessary toils. The ordinary work of life, he used to say, ought to teach them. That gave him rather too many lessons!

For his own part, he was quite tired of

drawing fine distinctions, and arranging thoughts in heads and chapters and sections. All that might be very useful for himself, but what did people generally care for it? Nothing at all. And no wonder; they got nothing by it. Nor did he.

The factories and workshops were *the* things *par excellence* in Newstel. Many people were rich in Newstel, and though they rarely visited their factories, or the poor people who lived near them now—except when the respective Boards of Directors met—they had made their money in a very vulgar way.

Pooh! *Non olet.* So, of late, Mr. John had been inspecting those places of industry which attracted to themselves the physical and mental activities of Newstel. The thousand devices for saving labour, multiplying power, and producing the grandest and most minute fabrics, naturally excited in him the greatest interest.

John's rambles were no longer over heathy commons or through solitary villages. One day he entered into that place of labour which has been already described to the reader. The buzz of machinery was deafening. The banging of iron bars resembled discharges of cannon. The rapid movements of a thousand figures seemed like the evolutions of a battle-field.

A conversation was going on. Having satisfied his curiosity for the time, he had leisure to listen to what was being said. The principal speaker was a tall man, with very broad chest, and highly muscular development; his arms were like sledge-hammers. He was a fine specimen of humanity. He seemed quite at home in his work, and was always in the best of tempers and the highest spirits. He sang and talked amid the clankings of bars and the throbbings of machinery. *He* was not one whose powers had been stunted by modern employments.

There was a moment's rest in the din. Such pauses often occur. The great wheels went roaring on, and the huge tilt-hammers were still thundering. But there was a sort of pause among the workmen.

It was like the momentary pause in the storm, when the thunder-clap has just sounded, and another flash is about to come; but for the while there is a lurid light and harrowing suspense.

The tall, thick-set workman smiled, and rested his arms a minute on the ledge before him. Bowyer thought of a certain "definition" of pleasure, that it is the exertion of power according to its own proper excellence. He thought also that a certain philosopher had made that definition into mince-meat. It would have been hard to make Jonas and his feelings into mince-meat.

Resting his arms on the ledge, the latter shouted to a companion, above the roar of the machinery,—

"I say, Bill, you and I will make our fortune."

"But how, Jonas?"

"Why, these flat bars that have to be turned by the hand; we'll make a turning machine for 'em."

The reply was lost as the clang of bars again resounded. Little bits of conversation like that were often heard. Every man was intent on his work again. But you can't work for hours without speaking to some creature, if it is but the cat.

Jonas did not mean much. Perhaps he was making a covert assertion of his own industry, on the principle which makes clever people call themselves ignorant and incapable, when begging praise. Perhaps he was proclaiming that he had found something to grumble about, and grumbling is pleasant. Or he might be uttering a deep sarcasm on modern inventions. For he had a secret suspicion of innovations, in spite of

his professed Radicalism and familiarity with mechanism.

But the words had struck Bowyer. In certain phases of our minds the least trifles are enough to set us a-thinking. A spider-web, a weathercock, a door-handle, or a Jack-in-the-box might, to a great mind, in small degree, perform the part which Newton's apple is said to have done.

A turning machine. He would think about it. Jonas was still at the same operation, and he looked at it again. It certainly did seem rather clumsy. The bars had to be stamped separately, and then separately lifted up to be carried away. Why not stamp and turn over a dozen at once by one engine?

"Why not?" he asked. Then he went into another part of the vast building. Those eight acres of brickwork might have occupied him for days. A new branch of industry had just been added. How was it getting on?

Pointed flames darted up here and there. Vistas of white light revealed themselves through open furnace-doors. A louder hiss of steam could be heard.

Gun-barrels were being forged. Bowyer could not help shuddering as he watched the cool workmen. They might have been making simple harrows or hoes. *They* cared nothing about the purpose of these weapons. They did not even remember that many of them would, like other noisy things, only adorn or frighten the world. The Chairman of a Peace Society was head of the department.

Everything seemed perfect here. The number of rifle barrels completed in a short space was astonishing. And how straight they were!

Stop; there was one thing that appeared strange. They had to be straightened by a hammer. Perhaps here too something better might be devised.

John thought a good deal about what he had seen as he returned. The smoky streets did not seem half so smoky, if there were only the prospect of gaining from them something which political economists find it hard to define, and harder to procure—Wealth.

Reaching home he pondered long with his hands raised to his head. He hadn't a scrap of dinner, and quite offended Mrs. Pritchers by his "gruffness."

Thus he continued for several days. The Essay on "Spartan Tactics" had not been touched. Indeed, he had received an angry letter with a stern threat annexed. But the scraping of tools had succeeded the scraping of the pen. Bowyer liked to finish a thing when he had begun.

Yes! he had done now, he thought. At the time when our chapter opens, he is standing with a delighted air straight in front of his little table.

Before him are two models. Cog-wheels, perpendicular and horizontal, revolve; rods move up and down; hammers are beating; and little cranes are moving little weights; all under the power of a hidden spring supplying motive force. His desired operations were here, he thought, imitated on a small scale. He set the spring going, as pleased as a child with its new go-cart.

The wheels are spinning along just as if they were alive. What a pity men can't be wound up, he thought, when they get old, and take a fresh term of life. Ah! he forgot that some elderly people would lack willing hands to wind the works up again. He forgot that the young now and then tire of the old.

There they go, spinning away! and he never hears the rap at the door at all. So the man who had been knocking walks in. He is a big stalwart workman, with brawny arms and deep voice. He had come in his

shirt-sleeves, and a paper cap was on his head.

John had quite forgotten having asked Jonas to step in this morning. His acquaintance with the latter was but of short date, John having made the first advances during a visit to the workshop.

But Jonas walked in as if he had known Mr. Bowyer intimately all his life.

He inspected the models with care. At the first one he shook his head knowingly, and Bowyer thought that his pains were all thrown away. Then he examined the second with a lynx-eyed provoking stare. He seemed anxious to detect a fault somewhere. Then he made his comment.

"That first one," he said, rather contemptuously, "would never be of the least use. The very same thing was once tried before."

"Then what of the second one?" Bowyer asked, in quick nervous speech.

Jonas seemed somewhat pacified, and said,—

"It really is a good hint. It might be made useful; but it wants a touch or two from some one that knows the trade."

John thought awhile.

Could he himself put the finishing touches? A little more labour might make the instrument perfect. But then he did not know what was really wanted. The mere hint imperfectly worked out might enrich some one else.

Jonas was staring at the sewed books with queer names. But he had seen what was passing through his friend's mind. Perhaps he had found out that he was no fool, and had begun to respect him accordingly. At any rate there was something of pity, if not of affection in his eyes, when he next spoke.

Looking John steadily in the face, he said,—

"I can make it right for you. Then it

will be a really good affair. I mean that second one. The other 'll not do at all."

To a generous mind there is something overpowering in generosity. It is the attraction of like to like.

"Then you shall share the profits, if there are any," John replied.

"Oh! there are sure to be profits," was the answer; "because it's just what is wanted. But I'll share no profits, not I, indeed."

And Jonas whistled a tune.

"I insist upon your taking a third of them, or I won't go on with it at all."

They need not have wrangled. They little knew the end in store for the machine.

So Jonas was forced to agree to receive a third of the profits. He had agreed simply from politeness. But he threw himself into the new work like a Trojan, and night after night was found plotting and planning in Bowyer's room. At last the piece of mecha-

nism was complete, and Jonas set it working. Then he looked on in silence for some minutes.

He slapped John on the back—he was a rude burly fellow—and said,—

"It 'll do. Now we 'll have the Patent."

CHAPTER V.

A SNUG RETREAT.

Shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art King?

SHAKSPEARE.

"THE villain! The deep-dyed villain!"

These words, with another still deeper expletive, accompanied a sounding bang on the wooden table, and proceeded from an enraged face. The plates on the table danced again. The face was good-tempered and good-natured enough generally; for it was the face of good-humoured Mr. Hardman. But mild people, when they *are* enraged, at times lose themselves altogether. So he repeated his words with a fiercer look and another naughty expression:

"The villain! the rascally rogue!"

He quite forgot the presence of the auditor who had just told him the story; so loud and energetic was he in voice and manner. Nor did the pretty white cottage in which he was standing, seem to exert a mollifying influence.

This little cottage was some four or five miles away from the scene of our last chapter. It was a pretty white-washed building, with a snug patch of garden, shaded by a clump of wide-branching elms; its yellow gravel walk leading into a neat little plantation at the back of the house. The garden gate was approached by a pathway of stones, which brought you through a small close away from the main road, where the wagons groaned and creaked all day long, as they were passing with heavy burdens of stone and iron to the town below.

Mr. Hardman was standing near the

window. A fine prospect lay before him. Far below was the city, half concealed with a waving canopy of smoke. The encircling hill on the opposite side formed a sort of amphitheatre. Woods, fields, gardens, spires, and clustering homesteads smiled with tantalizing beauty on the perpetual gloom and scrambling architecture of the town beneath. The point of the hill directly opposite Mr. Hardman's eyes was about seven miles' distance.

A linnet was singing just outside the window.

The person conversing with Mr. Hardman was old Nancy. Perhaps Mr. Hardman thought that he had a right to speak with a loud voice, for it was entirely his kindness which had brought her there. He it was who had given her the means of leaving her former dark and noisome neighbourhood. Years ago, Hardman had known her as a respectable woman, and he had lately renewed his

acquaintance, and put her in that snug little cottage.

He had recognized the woman with difficulty. That was one day when he was passing through Newstel to condole with Langholme on Walrond's decease. The poor woman, who thanked him for the odd sixpence, would have passed by, had not Hardman recognized something in her lineaments which he had known long ago. On asking her history, he found she was indeed the person whom he supposed her to be. That was a farmer's widow, who had been highly esteemed in his native village, and who, from reverses had been obliged to go to Newstel, leaving her daughter to be brought up at the Rectory.

Her features were such as were not easily forgotten. The grey eyes, compressed mouth, and small chin, stamped her at once as the Nancy of former years, although the mouth seemed more compressed than ever;

but that might have been the effect of years, or of grief. At any rate Hardman had taken such an interest in her, that he was well satisfied in expending a sum to relieve her. And he was not a man who liked to throw his money away.

Old Nancy had now been fixed in her cottage some time. Her benefactor had told no one what he had done; but every now and then he used to "pop in" upon her. This morning he seemed to be quite content with all the arrangements of the little place. A snug spot it was, he thought, as he looked down upon the dark smoke-gloom and wretchedness of the valley below. He peeped into cupboards and corners, examined the long-handled stone pump, and talked to the bird. Then he clapped his hands to his coat-pockets, and strode through the house with an important air. Nothing more seemed to want doing; so he drank a glass of the nice cold spring water, and began to

talk. He had been talking and listening just when this chapter began. He had learnt more particulars about old Nancy. But the longer he talked the more heated he appeared to become.

Nancy wore a neat print gown with a white apron, and had a sober cap on her head. She seemed to be losing something of that nipped look about the mouth, which the reader has probably not forgotten. When her tale, hitherto untold to any one, ceased, Hardman made a great lunge at some unseen object in the air, and used another naughty word.

"Oh! if I had him here—the foul-faced trickster!"

What he would have done did not appear. But it was evident that he had studied oratory. He had so suited the action to the word, and the word to the action, that he neatly projected the contents of his waistcoat pocket into the middle of the fire. It could

not be helped. Both snuff and snuffbox were ruined.

With this mishap—the result of misdirected energy—he took his departure. What he saw after he had gone, deserves another chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

PURE ZEAL.

It seemed for a while as though a majority . . . . with a patriotic forgetfulness of party . . . . were resolved to do the best that was possible for the country.

Extract from Newspaper.

As Mr. Hardman drew near to Newstel, he suddenly found himself in the midst of a confused bustle and hubbub. Workmen, stained with rust and grindstones, were eagerly conversing, children were being slapped by excited mothers, undergrown lads were smoking pipes and shouting, policemen were ogling at barmaids, and stout gentlemen were doing their best to get run over.

What was going on? Mr. Hardman inquired of several people, but they did not

know. He kept threading his way through the thickening crowd. But this was no easy task for a man of his bulk. After treading on several persons' corns, he rebounded into a fish shop. In struggling from beneath the 'bus wheels, he gave a tall military person a salute on the cheek with his stick. The latter stroked his moustache, and looked red. But the stick and its owner were twenty yards off, for Hardman was now glad to follow the course of the crowd. That took him to the fine brick edifice with steeply-sloping roof and long, pointed windows, relieved by a large round door down five steps, and ornamented with Doric pillars formed of iron and wood fastened together. That fine edifice had brought a great architect into note. It was where the Municipal Council met.

What was going on?—again. It was a little man, with a supercilious air and bulldog, of whom he inquired.

The little man would probably have called himself "a party," and he replied that what was going on was neither more nor less—here he examined Mr. Hardman's watch-chain—than a most awful contest. He should have thought everybody knew that.

But the crowd suddenly swept the little man away. A loud peal of laughter rent the air. A Punch-and-Judy show had begun, and everybody was staring at it.

Poor Mr. Hardman was really getting angry, for now the German band struck up. The music drowned every other sound. The pieces were droned through in a terrible way, but the crowd was glad of anything to divert its attention. The "Last Waltz" was going on most perseveringly, when a little urchin struck the chief flute player on the nose from a pea-tube. The musician, jumping a foot from the ground with pain, tried to hit the boy with his flute, but smashed it in two. This

incident made the crowd roar again, and even poor Mr. Hardman had to smile. They were easily amused, he thought.

But a little amusement before a great event need not be despised, still less the crowd which is "easily amused." That dense, surging throng, with its mighty passions and tumults, *was* easily amused when in trifling holiday mood. In this respect, notwithstanding its occasional rudenesses, it contrasted favourably with politer crowds in various parts of the world. Nor is Mr. Hardman to be condemned as a trifler, for he could not have hindered the trifling if he had wished, which he didn't. But he is perhaps to be pitied, for during all this time he has been wondering what was the matter.

At last there is a hush, and everybody is staring at the large building. Something either was or ought to be going on there by this time. Playful cries of the crowd began

to make themselves heard. "Hooray for the Mayor!" "Three Cheers for Old Gilt-buttons!" The latter was an improvisation for the name of Mr. Guiltspun.

"Why they can't be going to— No," said Hardman to himself. He had found out what the hubbub meant. And so, perhaps has the reader. To-day the new Mayor of Newstel was to be appointed.

Hardman was particularly interested in the result. And he didn't like being jostled about in the crowd; and if he hit another military man the consequences might be unpleasant. He was near the door. Why not walk in? So he put his hands in his pockets, and went down the five steps, and right through the round archway. The door-keepers must surely have been surprised, or else persuaded in some curious way or other. Hardman, however, very soon found himself in the same hall with Aldermen and other dignitaries, who were

themselves perhaps at times (but we, my dear Mrs. Pry-all, don't insinuate anything. Oh, dear no!) open to persuasion.

No one noticed Hardman now. He had reached the hall just at the crisis. The claims of both gentlemen, Guiltspun and Phraser, had been stated; but so great was the difference of opinion as to their respective merits, that nothing but a majority of votes was thought competent to decide. Each Councillor was about to vote.

Hardman reached the hall at the very moment when this voting was going on. Then the votes were counted. There was a breathless silence in the hall.

The crowd was roaring and surging below.

What was the result?

The votes were equal. The suspense now became dreadful. Phraser looked as pale as ashes. Mr. Guiltspun's face was as red as the ruby port he had drunk that morning.

The Chairman had to give the casting vote.

With the Chairman lay the result of all the toiling, bribing, eating, drinking, bowing, talking, backbiting, and betting of the past few months. To whose Party had he been invited, Guiltspun's or Phraser's?

Was he above "persuasion?" Or had he agreed with the guest at one of the parties? The guest had said,—"It is your strict, scrupulous fellows that do the harm now-a-days."

The Chairman looked first at one then at the other gentleman. One had his hands in his pockets.

He gave the casting-vote for—"Confound the crowd!" thought Hardman, with his hand to his ear. He had missed the word.

Oh! it must have been Phraser. For he is smiling like a victorious general. And everybody, except Mr. Guiltspun, is congratulating him.

Yes! Mr. Phraser was Mayor of Newstel.

The Aldermen might well wear those bright faces on leaving the Hall. They had made a wise choice, and felt that they had done their duty.

CHAPTER VII.

IO TRIUMPE.

The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men.
BYRON.

EVERYBODY was delighted. There could be no doubt that Phraser's success was the reward of high merit. Steadiness, business talent, and a nameless something which inspired confidence, were qualities which certainly deserved honour. Six or seven years of uniform professional success ought surely to gain distinction. If they didn't, it was a shame! What chance would they have themselves, pray; they, the readers of next morning's *Newstel Chronicle*, and the talkers in the Club, if Phraser had failed? And now they came to think of it, people remembered that they, or at any rate their sons, bore a

great resemblance to Phraser. They had his long head, and his way of taking time by the forelock, and this and that. There was hope for themselves still. So they were very glad about it. Guiltspun's riches would have been useful to the town, of course, perhaps to themselves. (But Query?) On the other hand, Phraser's professional capacity was of far more value than riches. Mr. Phraser was undoubtedly the right man.

Everybody was delighted. When the result was known outside the Hall, three loud cheers were at once raised. Good British cheers from throats that had—well, not drunk water this morning. The Common Councilmen filed out two-and-two, amidst a great outpouring of enthusiasm and waving of red cotton handkerchiefs. At that moment the bands struck up, colours paraded the streets, the boys hooted, the men roared, and the reporter of the *Newstel Chronicle* snapped his ink-bottle to with the air of an M.P. at least.

Have you, philosophic reader, ever seen a maiden aunt slam her house-door in the face of the Merry-Andrew? "Oh! that's it, is it?" she sternly says. Instead of a love-letter, it's only the jackanapes. No wonder she is indignant. But Mr. Hardman need not have imbibed that lady's ill-temper. Yet he seemed utterly indifferent to the triumphal rejoicings of the crowd. Indeed, the band hadn't half done "See the Conquering Hero," when our gentleman had placed between himself and the glorious strains, the door of the Nag's Head. Perhaps he needed a little refreshment after this morning's excitement.

At any rate, be his temper what it might, his appetite was good, and so was the chop, which was remarkably juicy and tender; and the port wasn't bad. By the time that the bill was paid, quiet was restored to the street and a good-humoured grin to Hardman's face. Mr. Hardman spoke. His

words, happening to be overheard, are recorded for thy special behoof, gentle reader, by a special reporter and a newly invented process.

"Eh! dear. Eh! dear. Only to think!"

This he was pleased to say as he regained the street. But it was rather enigmatical, and we don't presume to explain it. Whether the thinking was attended with pleasure or pain, was not recorded, but a sigh accompanied the words. Perhaps he was thinking of that matter which was now the town's talk. Everybody had heard of it, and passengers in the street were conversing on the subject. The regal banquet to be given at Highton Manor this evening was to be a glorious affair. Perhaps poor Mr. Hardman was thinking about it after his bit of a chop. He wasn't invited, but the reporter of the *Chronicle* was; and so we can describe the hospitality of the new Mayor.

A regal banquet it certainly turned out

to be. No fewer than fifty-two guests met together in Mr. Phraser's splendid halls. This time the *élite*, and everybody else, accepted the invitation without the least compunction. The tables were loaded with dainties; the rooms were filled with splendours; and a real architect had been called in to arrange the various adornments and decorations. Of course there was no lack of eloquence. The municipal giver of the princely entertainment was celebrated in every form of speech, and by gentlemen of various opinions. Nor was Mr. Phraser dissatisfied with the tribute of respect shown to himself, and the evident pleasure of his numerous guests. The ball which succeeded was one of the grandest that had ever been known in that part of the country.

Everybody expected a great treat. The flowers gracefully arranged about the front door, the artificial fountain playing in the hall, the posse of policemen, the double line

of carriages, the waiters fluttering about, gave token that something out of the common way was about to occur.

The ball had been talked of for long enough, and within at least twenty miles' distance. Perhaps fewer would have cared to stay any length of time, had it not been for Mr. Phraser's success. As it was, there was present a crowd of the fairest of the fair. Beauty, wealth, and rank were present. There were numbers of persons whom you would have been surprised to see at such a gladsome scene of festivity. And the music was charming. You might almost have thought that it was some spell that was bewitching the guests into a forgetfulness of all but the pleasures of the dance. So gaily did they flutter about to the entrancing strains. A thousand highly-painted humming-birds in the South American sunlight, would scarcely have looked more dazzling. And when the dance grew

wearisome, it was no slight relief to be able to stroll through the cool, green conservatories, where a myriad Chinese lamps, of every pattern and colour, lent a pleasing variety to the happy concourse. The distant music entered into those retired nooks with a sad, soft murmur, which seemed to say just what was in your thoughts. And when a companion said the same, it was all the better.

The festal joy extended itself from one guest to another. The crowds of people were thoroughly enjoying themselves, and not a few thought with gratitude of Mr. Phraser's taste and liberality. Happiness reigned everywhere. None were happier than the two daughters of the host, who really looked their best, and were much admired this evening. The white dress of the elder was dashed with a narrow border of violet—this being a staid colour, she thought—a bouquet of what looked like

violets, was at her heart. The dress of the younger was tinged with red, and she wore a natural rose. There were all kinds of dresses and ornaments. Some were elaborately wrought, others were prettily simple; here and there was an ungraceful one, but not a few displayed taste and thoughtfulness. Who would not have done their best to adorn a time of triumph? There were even ladies who were themselves complete works of art, being finished off in a well-packed perfection. Jewels, diamonds, tiaras, pigments, devices of ingenuity, studied effects, graceful postures, loving glances changed and interchanged with one another, like glancing forest-leaves under the pattering rain.

And why not rejoice when it was a moment of triumph? Mr. Phraser's chances of success had had one time seemed doubtful. This made the success all the more welcome now. The guests felt it right to rejoice;

their looks of delight showed how happy and delighted they were. There are times for joy.

It was all quite natural. Was it not pardonable in the new Mayor of Newstel that, as he walked with stately mien through his vast rooms, gazing on the splendour there concentrated, he should think that he, risen to such an eminence within a few years, presented a spectacle to be envied? His own exertions had done it all. A few years ago he was a nobody; now, rank and wealth were worshipping at his feet.

And he, too, looked handsome with his gallant air and white camellia. His white flower was, as it were, deeply set with the dark background of his dress-coat. How pretty are Nature's gifts! Bright and cheerful, if but the verdure-strip springing half-way down the blank precipice; or the moss that laps the torrent-stone; or the honey-suckle blooming on a lonely donjon.

They resemble, even in such cases as these, the bright look of day which greets the traveller who has emerged from the recesses of a mine or cavern.

And the Mayor of Newstel—distinguished and handsome as he was—looked none the worse for the ornament of a fragile flower.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHARP EDGE.

I have work in hand,
That you yet know not of.
SHAKSPEARE.

VERY unfortunately, during the triumphal festivities, several good people in Newstel forgot themselves. There was some excuse, perhaps, for the misdemeanour, for no end of good things had been provided at some nameless person's expense. They went a little too far, and a public disturbance ensued. It was very ungracious, and the next morning's *Chronicle* pathetically washed its hands of such ingratitude. But it couldn't be helped.

In the same sort of unfortunate way, some readers never know when to stop

laughing and fleering at a poor author. They don't dislike a joke, but they like better to turn everything into a joke. Such persons have been known to laugh at the most serious passages and personages, to the great interruption of the narrative.

If any such persons have honoured our pages with a perusal, they must remember that old Mr. Langholme was now long past his mirthful days. And merriment, in his circumstances, was almost impossible. There had come upon him something far more like the blankness of despair.

But in spite of his inward depression, there was still an elasticity in his step and a pleasant freshness in his manner. He seemed, as he passed this morning along the crowded pathway, to bear about with him something of the charm of the country. He reminded you of the bright bluebells on his own roadside. He was sunny in his sadness, and men stared with a cold, but not entirely

unsympathetic regard at the grey locks, the step beginning to totter, the composed gravity and cheerfulness of the stranger who was treading in their midst. But Langholme walked less firmly than he had done even a few weeks ago; and his intimate friends would scarcely have beheld him without a mournful presentiment. But perhaps his friends might have been mistaken. He would perhaps recover his strength and spirits when his doubts were settled.

Still there was about him that unusual sweet gentleness which is sometimes observable in men's declining years—a sort of softness which mellows the character, and affects all they do, becoming part and parcel of themselves—that tenderness which in a subsequent recollection clings to the mind as the one prevailing feature of their character. Langholme's "aging" face bore this morning the simplicity of childhood.

And his voice sounded with more than its

wont of silvery sweetness, as he replied to Mr. Phraser's greeting.

"He was pretty well," he said, "for an old man. His best days were over."

"Nonsense! nonsense! my dear friend, you have the activity of twenty young men!"

Mr. Phraser always made it a point to speak in a round hearty manner. That was one of his business rules. And he always tried to put people in a good temper. His frank, off-handed way succeeded well with his unsuspecting townsmen. The clients who came into his office, generally came in low spirits, in the half expectation of being cheated. The open-hearted handshaking reassured them at once.

"Of course it does," he said to himself. "Once on a time I used to take medicine in sweets. And one or two people are still found who judge of men by their coats, and of their reasonings by oratorical power."

The clients liked this frank way. Had he vexed them they would have knocked him down (at their peril, though!) as soon as look at him. They were rough but simple people.

Phraser was especially agreeable this morning. He was the Mayor of his adopted city; he was respected for his talents; his wealth was daily increasing. And he was humble in the midst of his greatness. Nay, he even used his feet, like an ordinary man, in walking to his daily business, though he was Mayor of Newstel. And Mr. Langholme had come to see him in the midst of all his hardly-earned honours. No wonder he was in a very good temper this morning.

He repeated more heartily still:

"My dear sir, you have the energy of twenty youths!" Langholme had come about that will, had he? Oh! it would be all right. No fear. "Let us see, though," he added, meditatively.

He tapped his forehead with his first finger, and played for some moments with his gold spectacles. Langholme cast several anxious looks at him. At last the lawyer's face brightened up. He seemed to have solved the difficulty.

"You haven't brought the will by any chance?" he asked.

This was said coaxingly. Phraser was half expecting that the will was in his client's pocket. Langholme was always obliging and polite. Phraser was surprised out of himself at the curt reply.

"No!"

Mr. Langholme said it with such a decided shake of the head as implied a good deal. There was some suspicion then rankling in the old man's mind. It would be necessary to be cautious.

"I only asked," Phraser said, "because we have not yet received our own documents."

"Then there's something wrong. There's something wrong;" the other excitedly replied.

"Why so?"

Phraser always liked to elicit information. He knew how to use it.

"Because my copy was sent off from India at the same time as the will was sent to you."

"Indeed! By the same mail?"

Langholme did not know. Phraser knew that when he asked him; and he was aware that neither of the two parcels had gone by the mail at all. The native servant had been a little too eager.

"Be calm, I entreat," Phraser said. "There is no cause for anxiety."

"You say not?" the old man added, gloomily.

"Of course, I know no more than yourself; but frankly I think not."

How Langholme's heart throbbed at the

cutting words! His face was as mournful as that of the man who was crossing the street below the office; the poor fellow had just lost his only child. And it was for his darling child that Langholme had toiled; she had been in his thoughts early and late; in his long weary readings he had tried to find something for her instruction. And the end was doubt and misgiving, and perhaps something worse, loss and ruin. A tumult of confused thoughts was in Langholme's mind as he took a sudden quick glance at the lawyer. Was he acting honourably?

The soldiers of the garrison passed up the street, playing a merry tune.

"But repose in us full confidence, Mr. Langholme. We will do our best for you."

"Ah!" He hoped so, indeed.

"You will only have to wait till the real will comes. A mere copy has of course no validity."

"No validity!" Langholme echoed. "I am aware."

"And my clerk is away to-day. Oh! he is worth a mine of wealth to me, is that young man."

So there was to be more frittering away of time and another interview. Righteous Heavens, why do ye not descend and bury all plotters and snarers in an Awe-inspiring tomb? But you would have had no victim to-day. *Si fractus illabatur*, &c. Mr. Phraser was smiling as affably as if he had relieved a troublesome beggar.

Langholme walked slowly out of the office. He gave a penny to the fair-haired child who had picked up his walking-stick. The child lived in a certain court, and walked lamely, so he deserved the penny.

CHAPTER IX.

MEETING AND GREETING.

"Sir," said he, "you are quite welcome."
BOSWELL.

"PARDON, Marm. Don't poke my eye out!"

Had not Langholme been deeply engaged in thought, he would have recognized a well-known voice. As it was, he stared at the ground, where instead of the daisies of his country lanes, he found plenty of advertisements. But he was deeply thinking. At last the well-known voice seemed to blend itself with his train of ideas, and come up into his mind as a part of his meditations. Raising his eyes in an absent way, he recognized two friends. Still he did not feel quite certain about their faces. Friends and that

stirring crowd were ideas which just then he could scarcely connect together. Perhaps they were only a part of his reverie.

Mr. Hardman had been obliged to speak out. The stout market-woman had already pierced the small of his back with an unmanageable umbrella. That article was too blunt to pink him with, but the stout owner made such a threatening demonstration, that even after he had spoken she might have had designs on his person. Still, his real motive for speaking in the words at the head of our chapter, had nothing whatever to do with the alarmed chicken seller. Hardman really wanted to interrupt Stockbridge, who was conversing with him. Stockbridge had been allowed to inspect the little cottage which Hardman had fitted up, and was almost too lavish in his compliments to his friend's generosity. A Fine-hearted fellow, The doer of a good deed, and various other pompous expressions he applied to his somewhat stolid

comrade. It was going too far; and the fortunate blow of the gamp had offered a friendly interruption.

Mr. Langholme with difficulty recognized his two companions.

In a vacant manner he shook their hands.

Stockbridge it appeared—though he had spent part of his time in Hardman's cottage—had really come to the city on business of his own. Tindwich, of which town he was, as the reader knows, Member, possessed some extensive works, among them being factories of Stockbridge himself. The latter maintained these not because of the money which they procured, considerable as that was, but rather as a means of increasing his influence over his constituents and fellow-townsmen, many of whom derived profit from his undertakings and speculations. His works were also, he admitted, a source of occupation to himself, and a means of increasing his own knowledge. He was

fond of machinery, and took an interest in useful inventions. But while he did not feel himself a competent judge of the latter, he found a difficulty in securing the advice of a practical and at the same time unprejudiced man—of a real working man who believed ordinary practice improvable. He had heard that Newstel boasted of one or two persons of the kind whose advice he required. In fact, he had come to the City to have an interview with some persons of this class. Mr. Stockbridge had heard—for tidings fly fast about those busy hives of industry in that part of the country—that there was a certain Mr. Jonas Nicholson, who had a clever young friend; both of whom were skilled in the practice, and one of them in the theory of mechanics.

Mr. Jonas Nicholson and his clever young friend were to meet him at the turn of the next street.

And there they both were; the strong,

stalwart man of the factory, with sledge-hammer arms and iron muscles; the active, slight, determined man of thought, who looked as if he could plan, and knew it.

There was at first a sort of conversation, at least as far as was possible among five men at once. They stood just out of the reach of the thronging wayfarers.

Langholme took to Bowyer at once—by a sort of natural selection. He liked the young man's open face, and the thought and power of his brow, and in spite of his present despondency and habitual shrinking from fresh companionship, found himself there and then drawn into an abstruse argument. The other three men by degrees began to take part in the war of words, and all business became impossible. Jonas, indeed, continued for a while to chalk out curious wheels and rods upon the blank wall of brick under which the party was standing; but his drawings were meeting with little atten-

tion, and he also began to take part in the conversation. It was plain that nothing would be done this morning. Another meeting would have to take place.

It seemed a pity, Langholme thought, for Stockbridge to have to pay a second visit to Newstel.

"Why not?" he said to himself.

Why not? covers a good deal, from jilting an old love to pawning a new gown. But in Langholme's mind it covered only an invitation.

"Why not come to Rossleigh?" he said.

The five men declined. Then they looked at one another, *hemmed* and *hawed*, and ended up by going. Poor Mr. Hardman never gave it a thought that two of his companions were scarcely his equals in the social sphere; while Stockbridge cared only to get his business done. And Langholme, the latter thought, wanted cheering up; he was looking poorly and careworn.

Had he a further reason for going? Some men would have avoided Rossleigh altogether. But for Stockbridge there dwelt still at Rossleigh something more pressing than business, and more beautiful than all manner of cunning workmanship.

CHAPTER X.

TROUBLESOME.

Heaven knows what she has known.
SHAKSPEARE.

It would be a cruel thing to say that the denizens of the lower regions of a house rejoice in the absence of their masters. They rejoice rather, let us say, in the opportunity thus afforded for free intellectual and amusing conversation. "There wasn't much to do in the garden to-day," John said; very little indeed, for he had taken in most of his plants, his scythe had gone to the blacksmith's, and he had fed the horses.

The lady "helps" too had a feeling that a little holiday would be beneficial to their health, Miss Mary having gone out on one of her missions of kindness. And she was so

kind, dear soul, that she would never scruple to give them a little rest. Only they never thought so when she was near.

One of the tests of love is said to be the desiring a person when absent; these domestics showed their love in an opposite way by feeling contented with the absence of the loved. Don't pout the lip, good reader, as if we were writing a mere prettiness, or as if you and I were unlike them. Many people please us best when they are farthest away. A tiresome man once observed, that moans for the dead would become real moans if the dead rose again.

It was a capital time for pleasant talk.

It was a mild balmy day, recalling the past summer; the sun shone brightly through the latticed kitchen windows of the old hall, making large "blotches," as John called them, on the white floor. The autumn breeze came softly upon the three people who were seated on the wooden bench by the

large open door, fanning their weary work-a-day limbs, with as sweet a fragrance as if they were real gentlefolks.

"Well, if that 's true, as Master observed the other day," said John, who generally took the lead in conversation; "we 're doing more good here, than if we were a-working."

"To be sure; but what did he say?"

"Why he was a-telling Miss Mary, that every one in the world is always a-looking for happiness."

"Oh! then I 'm sure I 'm a good deal happier here," said the younger girl, "than if I was a-cleaning out of the cellar."

"My word! Miss, you 'll catch it, if that there cellar ain't done when Master comes back to-night;" Cook observed, emphatically, by way of parenthesis.

John was somewhat angry at the interruption, but he pretended not to notice it.

"And he went on to tell her that this

happiness was in doing every one of us his own work."

"What did he mean by that, now?"

"Well, I didn't quite understand him, you see, for he talked a deal about limbs and brains, and men and engines doing what they were meant for, and what they could do best."

"Oh! indeed."

"But I know what I can do best now," he continued.

"And what's your own work and happiness, you mean;" said the younger girl, with a flash of intelligence.

"Yes."

"What is it?" asked the elder.

"Why, to sit quietly on this bench a-drinkin' in of this quiet mornin' air; that soothes me so, and makes me a new man like."

"It's very nice."

"It's what I can do best, at any rate;

and what I was meant for at this moment, and it 's my true work."

"That 's not Master's step?" said the younger girl, starting up with an affrighted air.

A slow step was heard coming up the garden. In the hurry, the three servants nearly overthrew the bench, then they scraped it away into the corner, heedless of its grim shriek at being jostled about after the quiet occupation.

There was certainly a step. In a moment a woman appeared. She had a peculiar phase of countenance, at which, on the first glance you might have shuddered. Her stature never very tall, was now bending with years, and she spoke as if exhausted with mounting the hill.

It was old Nancy.

"Is the Master at home?"

"No; and he 's not likely to be for such as you;" said the cook.

"We 've nothing for you;" said John, with a lordly voice. "Be off, good woman."

"Dear-a-dear! dear-a-dear!" she returned, with a sound between a chuckle and a shrill scream; "those that I speak to are glad to be at home. Glad to be at home," she repeated, with a fierce stare right into the eyes of the offending cook; "for I know, yes, I know," with a wilder shriek, "houses and homes that would na' stand but for me."

Here the servants began to fear she was demented, and the youngest retired in good earnest to clean the cellar. John, by way of saying something, replied:

"Oh! indeed.

"Yes, indeed!" she said, in an angry voice, "we 've nothing for you, haven't you? but many 's the folks that are glad if I 've anything for them. Yes!" she repeated, as if talking to herself, "many's the people that have rejoiced in my smile."

"Oh! then you can tell the future?" said the cook, her rudeness changing to awe.

"Many's the people that I have cheered and pained;" said the woman, apparently believing in secret powers of her own; "and I have a mission unto this house!"

The two servants gathered round her. The third had returned, and was shrinking in a corner.

The woman was speaking as if in contempt.

"And you spurn from your doorstep them as comes with kindly will. May you be able to spurn away them as comes with darksome glance! But na' luck lights on the man as scalds the robin."

"What can we do for you m'm?" John drew back a step as he said this.

"Let me sit here till the noon turns. If the Master comes back then, I'll tell him what is his concern."

There was no turning her away. Nor did she appear to be exactly a fortune-teller. She seemed rather to be a person who possessed, or thought she possessed, valuable information. Perhaps she was half crazed with sorrow, one of those silly women whose solitary brooding lives make them fancy that they are entrusted with unusual powers. Such gifts, if the truth must be told, old Nancy had once claimed; but more for the sake of the protection and respect they insured, than from any thought, poor woman! of encompassing her objects unlawfully. Perhaps in time she had come to believe in herself, as most people do who make pretensions of any kind; but of late she had abandoned such claims altogether. The servant's opposition, however, made her old feelings flare up again; and for the time she, perhaps, really fancied herself an uncommon personage. So easily do similar states of mind run into one another.

But old Nancy had gained her object. She ensconced herself in a corner. There she sat patiently, quite silent, except when she thanked the servants for the food which they gave her from their own repast. But two o'clock came, and Mr. Langholme had not yet appeared. She would have to walk to Newstel, and must be returning. Her parting words were uttered in a very solemn tone of entreaty, or rather of warning:

"As you value your souls, tell Mr. Langholme that old Nancy will help him!"

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE RESCUE!

Like the bright shade of some immortal dream,
Which walks when tempest sleeps the wave of life's dark stream.

SHELLEY.

THERE was no railway to Rossleigh. The precipitous hills and hard brittle rocks would have made such an undertaking enormously expensive. But a pretty road made amends for the slowness of the route. Hill and woods and falling streams and rushing water-wheels lay all about, and in the fine months at least, few regretted the lengthened journey.

The scenery and bracing air had their natural effect upon the five persons who had met in Newstel. Even the slow, rickety coach lent them a little variety. A curious

old vehicle the latter was; its chief advantage being that it allowed ample time for seeing the country; and the old driver was almost as curious as his vehicle. He had been in his prime when passengers made their wills before travelling to London.

Those were the days for him, the old fellow would tell his passengers; and the man's ready conversation, tinctured with distant recollections, combined with the delightful route to ensure plenty of fares to the old coach. The latter quite looked down upon those screeching railways, which were far its juniors in years, despising such novelties as heartily as an old salt despises the squealing cabin boy. The old Jehu still retained a sort of guard with the real old trumpet—and the whole turn-out swaggered through the little villages and white wayside inns in the very colours which it had borne in its palmiest days.

The journey proved very enjoyable to our five friends, but more especially to Bowyer

and Jonas, who had been of late too much pent up in close quarters. Jonas had begun to work harder than ever. Since he had become acquainted with Bowyer, he had ceased to observe Monday as a solemn holiday.

The party alighted from the coach near the pretty bridge across the stream. The waters rippled merrily in the afternoon sunlight; and the fields, as the party ascended to the little village, were green with a second crop or yellow from the frsh-reaped corn. The village, with its row of whitewashed houses and thatched roofs, lay quite secluded from the world. The old church stood in the centre embowered with trees.

But there was one yew-tree which shaded the gateway, and formed quite an arbour over the walk beyond; the villagers had to pass beneath its boughs in order to reach the old church-door; and its leafy covering would be there for generations to come. Langholme could never let a stranger pass without

showing him the old tree. And like other people who are fond of ancient buildings and understand architecture, he thought that his tastes were shared by everybody.

He used to become quite enthusiastic when he came to the features of the Norman chancel, with its beautiful traceries and finely-sculptured ornaments: "Never touched," he would warmly say, "by any rascal of a Leveller or Vandal, but except for repairs, just as it left the master's hand."

And there were the perpendicular windows and the old ivy-covered tower, with its eight old bells: "made," as he told the indignant Jonas, "when your manufacturers made real things, and not shams; peace to their ashes!"

But Jonas respected the old man's grey hairs, and did not enter into dispute. The party soon reached a spot which commanded a view of the valley.

The reader knows what they saw. Opposite was the bare moorland, crowded with

unwieldy rocks and stunted trees; far below the silvery streak of river wound under its quaintly-arching bridge; westward of the hill-side glowed a deep fiery mass of autumnal foliage; and further down again was the white road twisting and winding about through green and brown and yellow, till it lost itself near the town beyond. Eastwards the wild mountainous glen continued its upward course, bare and bleak and rugged.

They were standing beneath the eastern window of the building. Exactly in the centre of their view the old village cross stood rudely out as if claiming for itself an influence on the scene.

Mr. Langholme had ceased to speak, and they were lost in their own thoughts, when a sharp cry was heard. It came from the adjoining farmyard. The sound was as of some female in distress.

Bowyer was over the low boundary wall in an instant.

There was no time to lose. He saw that at once.

A person with a bag in her hand was thrown down on the floor, while a vicious dog, half-bull dog, half-mastiff, was pressing her with its vicious claws. Its fangs were close to her face; it kept raising its foul head with a grin or low yelp. The poor woman was powerless.

On the other side of the yard a man was quietly pursuing his labour.

What could Bowyer do? If he set on the dog at once it would reek its rage on its victim. It was already growling louder, as his friends were beginning to shout encouragement and advice.

That instant the labouring man decamped with sudden speed.

Bowyer was two yards off, with a large clasp-knife in his hand. The dog was growling in the woman's ear, as it rent her clothes to tatters. It was just going to bite!

He sprang forward. The dog opened its mouth in mad fury. It grappled with the first object that met it. This through a quick movement was Bowyer's knife. The blade was fiercely bitten, and dashed out of Bowyer's hand.

He was unarmed. The enraged creature, flowing with blood, glared at him from above the fainting woman. In one second Bowyer's bare hand had flung the animal gasping on its back.

But the woman could not stir. Bowyer beckoned to his friends. While he was doing so, the dog had sprung at his throat and pinned him to the ground. Its red grinning teeth and frenzied passion would make short work. The four gentlemen rushed forward with a loud cry.

But before they reached him, Bowyer had pierced the creature's heart. The blade was just within his reach. He had had a hair-breadth escape.

The struggle occupied barely a minute. The shouts and congratulations of his companions sounded strangely on his ears, as he reeled along under his exhaustion. He seemed to be tossing on an angry sea.

But it was worse with the person whom he had saved. She was still lying in a death-like swoon.

It was Miss Langholme.

How had she got there? And would she recover?

This shall be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

SKILL.

Of a body as fair
As was his mind; and no less reverend
In face than fame.

BEN JONSON.

MR. PHRASER had of late enjoyed remarkably good health. In fact, to use his own words, he had never felt better in his life. This is not such a trifling matter as it may seem; for do not trivial things assume importance when they concern great personages? Mr. Phraser was quite at home in his new dignity, and he knew that it was well merited.

So he seated himself comfortably in his office this morning, and, after stirring the fire, rested one leg upon the other, and began to read a paragraph of his own

writing in the *Newstel Chronicle.* Hockster had not yet come; of late he had been less punctual.

Let not any reader be needlessly prejudiced against any of Mr. Phraser's peculiarities. Some men are eccentric, but Mr. Phraser had many really excellent points. Let all things be taken into the account. He bore a good name. Indeed, if any one had ventured to attack it in any way, it would have been at the risk of an action for libel. A good name is very precious when it produces gold.

He had, moreover, a capital head for business. To egg on doubtful clients was easy work with him. *He* never threw a damp on their laudable desire to increase his business. With those lawyers who weakly discouraged their friends he had no patience. *His* friends were never discouraged, nor were their cases ever lost, unless the friends were enemies, and had provoked him. However shady a case

appeared outwardly, he could always win it. He was a good workman; and people rightly value good work.

And he was at peace with everybody. Of course, he was quite ready for war; but so are all truly peaceful nations. Mr. Phraser valued himself on his facility in accommodating his creed to the prevailing tone of opinion. His largeness of view made him love to sink minor points, and allow men, in matters of morality and opinion, to agree to differ amicably. The lawyer was always careful to maintain a close intimacy with people whose pious reputation was well established. The gentleman in whose chapel he had lately bought a pew (admitting, it was thought, into a larger pew in the next world) considered him one of his most hopeful sheep. And no wonder that he was regular in attending his place of worship. It was respectable and the way of the world. The world would have wagged its tongue if he had

refused to accompany his wife and daughters. And, to do him justice, he inclined at the bottom to the belief that there was a stage of existence beyond the present.

He was a respectable man in every way. Respectability had been his systematic study ever since he had set foot in Newstel, and it was always in respectable channels that he always distributed his money. His name was to be found on the most important of the printed lists.

His conduct, too, was unimpeachable. He went home at regular hours, except on one or two days in the week. But he had the latch-key for the small hours, and let nobody stay up. Legal business does keep people late sometimes.

And he was a model paterfamilias. He never caused disorder at home. He was not one of the roystering, unmannerly tribe, who make their friends uneasy. Now and then he did drink spirits pretty deeply, but it was

in his own sanctum, when he was well locked in; and, as he had a strong head and did nobody any harm, what possible objection could there be to this course?

He did nothing to create scandal. Very few were his equals in the accomplishment of observing appearances: he had no sympathy with the prevailing folly of depreciating outsides. How, he asked, could men be thought genuine and honourable and the possessors of a thousand and one virtues, unless they gave some evident proof of their hidden excellence? The world wasn't going to take men on trust, and he, for his part, wasn't going to try to persuade it. Virtue dwelling apart was a ridiculous idea, implying patience and experience to test its reality; the world hadn't time for cloistered goodness. How could men see, he asked, but with their eyes?

Once, indeed, a person had dared to assert that a man might be the abode of perfect

virtue and get blackballed, pumped on, and transported for his pains. But that was a long time ago, and Mr. Phraser thought him wrong.

And, in regard to Walrond's will, more might be said for Phraser's position than would at first appear. It was made in India. India was far distant, and a resident there could not be expected to know the proper mode of spending money in England; and Mr. Langholme, if not well off, ought to have been so by this time. At any rate, he was a man of few wants, and had little need of money. Let his pride once get over the thought of being banished from his old home, and he would easily bury himself in his books. Indeed, Langholme's happiness would be increased if the place were taken out of his grasp. Had not Truepeny told them on Sunday that riches are a snare?

And then about Mary? Oh! yes, Mary. Well, she was sure to have enough suitors,

who would feel interested in her solitary situation, supposing she outlived the old man. Or—yes, he would let the world see him act charitably—he would get her a situation in a respectable family.

On the whole, then, he had a good right to the estate. Indeed, if Walrond had known his character and position, he would perhaps have left it him. In taking it, he was obeying a higher law, and fulfilling the testator's unwritten intentions.

There was a knock at the door. It was rather startling coming just then. The clerk handed a card.

It was our friend Samuel Withers.

"Tell the gentleman to walk up," said Mr. Phraser.

Mr. Withers was clad in a suit of the best black, and looked quite imposing as he stood at the door. He kept pulling his scraggy locks, and repeatedly bowing till Phraser pointed to a chair.

"What is it, Withers?" he asked.

"I 've com'd about that there patent business, sir, as you told me to see to."

"Oh! indeed. Not too loud, Mr. Withers."

"I 've managed it, sir, this time," he said, winking his eye, and making a horrible grimace; "right for *you*, sir, and wrong for *him*."

Phraser rubbed his hands. His expression was full of glee, as if he had met with an unexpected piece of luck.

CHAPTER XIII.

FEELINGS.

She is simplicity's child.
BURNS.

MARY was borne gently home in her father's arms. The old man's surprise and distress at his sudden calamity, were piteous to behold. Nor could any have failed to be moved by the mournful scene. The pallid face reposing softly on the tottering father's shoulder, the flaxen ringlets, generally so neat, streaming down in wanton looseness; the strange death-like beauty of the rigid form, must have impressed even a chance spectator. But to the four friends the sorrow came with all its intensity. Jonas, stern and calm as he generally was, wept like a child. What a difference between

the delicate girl's passionless face, and the sobbing agony of the workman!

A sad ending, indeed, had closed the lady's well-spent day. In the morning Miss Langholme had gone forth on one of her merciful errands. She had visited the village almshouses and scattered homesteads. There "Little Aingie," as the people still persisted in calling her, was always welcome. To the afflicted, a cheerful presence and bright beauty are as dear as words of counsel and offices of friendship, and Mary possessed all these. Nor did she ever part with her natural dignity. Yet she treated her friends as if gifted with intelligence and experience, never laying claim to a monopoly of fine feelings. The latter was a great secret of the love she had gained.

The brutal violence of the attack had come on the sudden. There was a mystery about it, which was never quite cleared up.

Miss Langholme was on her way back to Rossleigh about the time when the coach stopped near the bridge. There remained now only old Jabez to see. Very old he was, a hundred at least, if report could be credited; at any rate, he had looked the same for the last forty years. He lived in the farm close to the church. After seeing old Jabez, Miss Langholme was returning home the nearest way. This was through the farm-yard into the narrow village-road. The yard was little used, being chiefly filled with rubbish. But to-day a labourer, with a scowling black visage, was doing something in a corner. She quickened her pace as the man ceased working. It was then that the dog, apparently incited by the labourer, rushed out. Another minute, and she would have been torn to pieces.

The reader knows the sequel.

The dog's owner was never discovered. Some persons imagined him to be a scamp

connected with the gipsy gang then haunting the village. But this was a mere supposition. The only thing in its favour was, that the gipsies left the village that evening. But they were found still loitering a few miles off, and might have gone for their own convenience. The villagers, however, henceforth kept clear of their camp; but the mystery overhanging the whole proceeding was never cleared up.

The result might have been much worse. It was fortunate that Bowyer and his friends had borne their timely assistance. Even as it was, they were nearly too late. Miss Langholme continued for hours in a sort of swoon; and after returning to consciousness, continued long in a weak, drowsy state, which caused her friends much anxiety.

Poor old Mr. Langholme moved from her side not once during all the hours of her unconsciousness, but continued to watch over her with little intermission, until he

felt sure that she was regaining her strength. It was probably owing to the latter's careful attention, that the girl recovered even as soon as she did, for the serious shock and fright had terribly affected her delicate system. Yet Mary began to recover. What a bright smile her father wore, as she once more began to walk about the house and garden!

And the rejoicings of the simple village folk were almost as great as Mr. Langholme's own.

No one was more pleased than Bowyer at the recovered vigour of Miss Langholme. Not that he hinted at his feeling of sympathy and satisfaction; to do so would, in a person of his position, have been impertinent. And he had never said a rude or unfeeling thing to any one in his life. Yet, it must be owned, that he felt greatly relieved and overjoyed.

It was now that he really enjoyed the scenery of Rossleigh. During the illness of

a member of the family, thorough enjoyment had been impossible to his unselfish mind. Yet even in his grief and embarrassment, he had been strangely affected; indeed, his very first glance at the place awoke in him a feeling of awe, and made him think that he was being introduced to a personage who had long been familiar with his innermost thoughts. That grey tower, the long windows and lofty battlements, roused a dormant feeling. But he could not explain it.

He could now, however, indulge his fancies as he liked. In spite of his usual fecundity of thought, the same odd idea kept recurring whenever he looked at the walls. His impression became fuller and more intense. The deep foliage of the elms and beeches awakened some old feeling. One evening, as the darkening sky still glowed with sunset tints, the thought came to him with great distinctness. He pressed his hand to his

brow, as if thereby to retain the image in his mind.

It was something of the following kind, at least as far as he could find words to describe it; but he was no master of language, and no *language*, he afterwards said to one whom he loved, would have depicted the vividness and beauty of his sensation.

But it was as if at evening, away from all human abodes, by the shore of a boundless lake of unruffled blue, one should hear a low strain, softened by the watery distance; the melody neither from strings nor wind, nor human voice, and yet partaking of all these, and the sweet air should be, after all, but one of the songs of childhood.

At least these were the best words John could find for describing his odd feeling. And this simile he "hammered out" only after a good deal of pressing of his brain.

But of one thing he was quite sure. The feeling had nothing to do with that which persons sometimes experience on visiting a strange place, the feeling, namely, that they have been there before. And yet it had a similarity with that more common sensation.

And he began to take a pleasure in the scenery greater than any which even he had felt hitherto. The wild moors and expanse of woodland, the varied hues of the trees, and the curious forms of rocks, filled him with plenty of his own "glad-mournful" thoughts. Every window commanded a different view, and with every fresh view there came to John's sensitive mind a new series of sensations, just as in walking through a cold passage into which warmer rooms open you feel the different currents of air. Or, to make another comparison, as a lake reflects the colours of the sky, so Bowyer's mind was a sort of mirror to

the scenery he loved. "How happy," he thought, "must they be who live in such a mansion!"

And the heiress of all this grandeur, how unassuming and good and beautiful she was! Perhaps that should not have entered into his reflections on scenery, but it did nevertheless. Had not the poet said that amid all the glories of a rural scene, if "chance with nymph-like step fair virgin pass, what pleasing seemed for her now pleases more"? Perhaps Miss Langholme was not quite as "fair" as Milton would have selected, at least for poems. Many fair ones have more regular features, though perhaps not more sparkling eyes; but her little mouth was now and then a *little* too firmly set, and her head tossed back a little too much, for most men's fancy: for most men, that is, in a position to look at Miss Langholme, which Bowyer, of course, was not. Still, Mary's tall, fragile

figure, and flaxen ringlets (of the colour in fashion before William the Norman altered things), might have impressed a less impressible youth than our hero. But Bowyer ought, certainly, to have remembered his position.

He ought, moreover, to have been thinking about his work again. Jonas kept eyeing him suspiciously, as if he were a piston-rod that required a bit of hammering. Jonas wasn't angry, but he looked full of hints; looked really cross sometimes. And poor John felt sure he was doing something or other very wrong, for Jonas was polite to everybody except to himself. Indeed, the workman seemed as if he had been born to converse with gentlemen; his narratives sometimes entertained the whole table. But he took no pains to conceal from John that something was the matter.

One day Jonas, having said some very civil words, left him with a more peppery look than ever. As he went away, John saw

Miss Langholme coming down the walk. He would have avoided her, but there was no side walk. He could scarcely turn his back and quicken his step. The young lady had never spoken to him alone, and her frank eyes would search his soul into the depths. He would seem to be abusing Mr. Langholme's hospitality. But as he glanced at Mary's approaching figure, her long hair waving on the gentle breeze, and her face still pale and unusually thoughtful, she seemed more beautiful than ever; there was no denying it. While he was thinking so, she had reached him.

"Have you noticed," she said, "the effect of the sunlight on that distant tree, Mr. Bowyer?"

Sunlight on a distant tree? then perhaps she hadn't found him out. It was another sunlight that had lightened his soul. But he only said,—

"No, Miss Langholme. I see it now,

though. How curiously it shines on the thousands of sprays, and makes the big tree look like, what shall I say?"

He paused at a loss for a simile, an unusual thing with him. But there was in his mind just then little beyond one single thought, and comparisons of all kinds were certainly odious.

"A porcupine's back?" she suggested, laughingly.

"Or an illuminated device."

"We call it the 'Trysting-tree.' It is quite famous about here. And there is one poor old man who has lived under its shade all his days."

"How very curious!"

"Yes; he likes it so much that he has built a sort of cottage there. I have been to see him sometimes."

"How happy you must be, Miss Langholme, in spending so much time upon good deeds."

"But for you, sir," she replied, "I should have been relieved of that task. Mr. Bowyer, I have to thank you for saving my life. My father has already done so in my behalf. I wish just to do so myself."

Saved her! He wished he could die for her that moment! And she had thanked him with her own lips. He was overwhelmed. He could barely stammer out some sort of a reply, he knew not what. And yet, in spite of his confusion, he wished he could have gone on talking in her presence for ever.

Miss Langholme left him with a very stately and haughty air, he thought. But for the rest of that day Bowyer was in dreamland. He had had another vision of a goddess, and would have given anything to be able to make an offering at her shrine, if that would but attract her notice! Of course, he dare think of nothing beyond a cold notice.

Was it very rash in this young good-for-

nothing to raise a reverent eye at the shrine of a beautiful deity,—and one, oh! how beautiful in his eye!—dwelling in a heaven thick-set with battlements and turrets, and guarded by vigilant protectors?

Very.

Meanwhile a messenger was hurrying post-haste to Rossleigh. His message was important; it was for Jonas.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOSPITALITY.

Where the argument carries us, we must follow.
PLATO.

IN spite of suspense about the will and a general sense of failing health, Langholme became quite cheerful as his daughter recovered, and proportionate to his joy was his gratitude to her deliverer. He was becoming really fond of young Bowyer.

The latter had one day returned from an excursion into the woods beyond the hill, when he found Langholme thoughtfully pacing the front walk.

"I have been meditating," said the old man, "on what you told me yesterday. You told that you had read much of authors of all

kinds, and yet that you were dissatisfied with your desultory studies."

"Yes; I feel more and more the disadvantage I have suffered by lacking the blessing of a University education."

"And entering into competition where wits most do congregate?"

"Yes."

"I think you mistaken. I have, you know, been in the headquarters of such contests. You may, I think, bless yourself that you are one of the very few young men who have worshipped culture without artificial stimulus."

"Indeed?"

"Mark! I am saying nothing against University education; I have got too much good from it for that. I am speaking only for your encouragement. You seem to me to be a young man who would not have sought such an education simply as a means of improving your social condition."

"Good heavens, no!" Bowyer exclaimed, startled out of himself. "I would follow learning for its own sake, whether it led to riches or poverty."

"I thought so. Well then, as far as your mental development goes, I don't think that has suffered in the careful process of culture which has gone on under your own eye. Only those who bring an able mind to a system derive benefit from that system; the system does not supply the mental force. Now you have cultivated your own powerful mind according to what you have felt to be its wants and yearnings."

The young man blushed at the praise.

"Of course you have not had the society and friendships which a University gives. But your mind appears to me to be in quite as healthy a state as it would have been had you been subjected to the restraints of a system."

"Oh! but many do so well; and it is the high-road to the world!"

"I thought you didn't care about the latter idea."

The young man cared for it a good deal more than he thought. He only replied that he did not care much for it.

"Well, in that respect you have suffered. But, as far as the 'doing well' goes, 'doing ill' would better describe much that you allude to. Plenty of students as eager and earnest as you contrive to live for years at a great tension, don't get what they had set their minds on, and become life-long fools!"

"They must have been poor things to begin with!" Bowyer said, with contempt.

"Perhaps so. But the strain was a trifle severer than they expected, and they end up with a sickness at heart and general weariness of life, which become part of their formed character."

"I never saw any such persons," the young man replied.

"No; but I have seen plenty of them.

Mind, I am not speaking against such education in the abstract. Oh, dear no! But what I say is, that home-bred self-culture, diligently pursued and as well directed as yours, enlarges the mental powers as much as any system."

"I am glad to hear you say so. But I can't say that you convince me. It is such a grand thing to be taught the greatest thoughts of the greatest minds!"

"You speak with enthusiasm. But, if you will take my word for it, it is a fact that many of the persons who are fondest of these lofty thoughts of yours, and speak and write the best about them, are not always the least prejudiced!" the old man observed half to himself.

"Well, Mr. Langholme," Bowyer said, "you wouldn't mislead me willingly, I'm sure. But I should have compared teachers to the sweet flowers and pupils to the honey-making bees of Hybla."

Bowyer was fond of making quaint comparisons.

"Very pretty!" the old man returned. "But some of the honey has a queer taste, if what I have seen may be taken as a specimen. And I taught and examined a good long time myself."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, I have known of lads who have quoted pages of Hegel, which they have been taught, while they haven't understood a word of him."

"How different from Comte's idea, that too much reading repressed originality!"

"Very. Yet others of our new lights follow that teacher's advice, and turn out quick-witted and nimble-penned, but equally devoid of philosophy and scholarship."

"Well, I am more satisfied, after what you have said, with my own work of self-culture."

"Yes; you are *yourself* uninjured. But I have known people who have seen nothing in the world but their own phantoms."

"How very ridiculous! They must resemble those gentlemen who are kind enough to imagine a heaven for us with various kinds of work, such as iron-smelting and road-mending! And perhaps a Deity who is a residuum from everything besides!"

"I am an old man, and you are beginning life; but your self-culture has taught you to adapt yourself to the requirements of your position."

Bowyer looked at the ground, and coloured slightly. Langholme took it for modesty, and continued:

"But some youths I have known have had stores of learning too cumbrous to employ; others have turned out disappointed men; while very few have obtained what they expected from their labours."

"Well; you have made me to see things in quite a new light."

"Now, at the end of my lecture, I will give you an old man's experience."

"Do, please."

"There are two things in life worth having—one for enjoyment, the other for power. True enjoyment consists in being able to think quietly and deeply for its own sake, without hindrance."

Bowyer considered this one of the opinions natural to an old man. Age loves quiet. For his own part he preferred some active exertion to mere thinking for thinking's sake. He merely replied:

"Ah! and what is the source of power?"

"The one source of power," Langholme repeated impressively,—"the spring of distinction, wealth, and greatness, is force of will. The man of indomitable will succeeds at last. The man fails only when the resolution falters."

"Then you consider thinking and willing man's greatest blessings?"

"I do, Bowyer."

This was the first time he had not appended "Mr." to Bowyer's name; and the latter would have been glad of the conversation, had it been only for the familiarity to which it led. In fact, Langholme was conceiving quite an affection for the young man. The present conversation showed that, though it might not have much value in itself, being merely the views of an old man dissatisfied with present things, in which he no longer bears a part, and regarding with partiality the distant halo of his youthful successes. But it must be owned that Langholme had come across many persons whose youthful promises had never been performed, one source of which he had found to be a silly brooding over disappointed hopes. He wished Bowyer to become a useful member of society.

The evening breeze was blowing cold, and the leaves were whirling about in little eddies here and there on the gravel walk as the gentlemen retired to the house.

CHAPTER XV.

NEVER MIND.

An' tell aloud
Their jugglin' hocus pocus arts,
To cheat the crowd.
BURNS.

THE messenger who came to Jonas was fortunately a man of few words. Had his tale been long, the latter might have forgotten himself more than he did, and been still rougher. It was strange news that he bore.

The labour which Jonas and Bowyer had expended on the patent turned out to be all thrown away. Some one had been beforehand with them. The patent had been refused them. It was most annoying. They had been giving themselves the rest at Rossleigh in the hope that they had at

length made for themselves a position, and would have to work less. But now all these hopes were dashed out of their hands, and there was still before them a future of dull, monotonous plodding. Jonas felt sick at heart.

The latter took the blow with the childish simplicity of his nature. He spoke gruffly to the messenger, talked in a very loud voice, stamped about the room, and, for a while, quite forgot where he was. Then he asked for the narration again, and the same scene was re-enacted. So violent indeed was he, that the poor messenger had not yet ventured to tell him the real authors of all his woes.

But when Bowyer was called into the conference that became possible. The latter bore the news far more patiently. He had never expected any great issue from the undertaking, but had thought it as well to make an attempt to better himself. Fortune

would assuredly turn some time, and smile on him, if not now. And he was more familiar than Jonas with the thought of misfortune, and hence perhaps fitter to bear it when it came. John's mind was moreover filled with a variety of ideas, the result of his self-culture; hence the misfortune did not employ his whole powers of thought. Whereas there was in Jonas's mind, for the time being, but one blank vision of ill success. And John knew that there were many things better than riches, which he was far from placing in the highest rank of worldly goods. But Jonas had had more opportunity of learning the value of money, and seeing what it will procure, and bore the deprivation with more discomposure.

Such was the difference in feeling and manner of the two young men as regarded their loss. Yet, in spite of Jonas's emphatic action and earnest declamation, and loudly expressed desires to inflict corporal chastise-

ment on somebody or other,—the messenger had not yet dared to name the guilty persons,—it may be doubted whether the pain was to him as acute as it was to his quieter friend. For John, though he made no demonstration of feeling, did not find it an easy matter to bear the sudden loss of riches when brought nearly within his grasp. It was almost as if the plank should elude the sailor's grip, and there was nothing now but to battle with the stormy waves.

But when a blow comes, it has come, and the worst is over. It isn't half as bad as it appeared likely to be. In a few minutes the two men found themselves calm enough to listen to the rest of the messenger's narration.

Poor messenger! He had had a thankless task. He had brought the information because of his friendship with Jonas, and nothing but hard words had he got hitherto.

Who had anticipated them?

"Cheated them?" vociferated Jonas.

The messenger hesitated awhile. This was the point for which he had been summoning up his courage during the whole interview, and his courage failed him at the critical moment.

"Speak, man, speak!" Jonas shouted.

But the man was still silent.

The man dared not speak. At last he opened a pocket-book, and silently handed to Jonas a piece of paper, which he had prepared for the emergency.

It was a paragraph extracted from the *Newstel Chronicle.*

When Jonas had read it, he threw it down on the floor, and literally tore his hair in furious passion. Then he walked about the room. His angry tones could be heard all over the usually quiet Grange. Whatever did the gentlemanly owner think of this outburst?

The paragraph was lying on the ground.

Bowyer picked it up, and read as follows:—

"We have to congratulate a fellow-townsman on having secured a Patent for an important invention. It relates to the turning of steel bars. Two heads are better than one; and Mr. Withers, the inventor, has, we are told, had the advantage of a learned head in regard both to some details of his invention, and to the obtaining of the Patent."

Bowyer read it without changing a feature.

"It 's a piece of thorough roguery!" Jonas said.

"Anyhow, we can't help it," the other replied; "the fellow has managed to plough with our heifer. Who has been the other wise head, I wonder?"

"Ay, it doesn't mention his name, but I'll be bound to say it 's that rascally Phraser!"

"Oh! no, he wouldn't do such a trick as that, I'm sure."

Here the messenger interposed. Mr. Phraser had helped his client about the patent, he knew, and probably about some other matters as well. "He had taken care," he said, "to ascertain the name of the person who had assisted him."

So Phraser and Withers had check-mated them, and they had secured for themselves a grand game as well, for there was now little doubt that the invention would be lucrative, and that before long. What a shame it was, the young man thought, that a person of Mr. Phraser's means should stoop to wrong them! And Phraser was a man, too, who, whatever evil deed he did, was sure to be on the right side. If they said a word against him, he would probably get the better of them, making it appear that they, and not he, had done the wrong deed. So they would e'en have to hold their peace.

It became necessary, however, to leave Rossleigh directly. There might still be some help for them at Newstel. Perhaps in their inmost hearts they were hoping that the messenger's account was in some respects exaggerated.

With the two sufferers none sympathized more than Mr. and Miss Langholme. The opposite dispositions of the two men—the one, quiet, patient, firm-tempered; the other, eager, passionate, and impetuous, each capable of the highest uses, and each revealing itself under the sudden attack—were in themselves worthy of interest. But Bowyer had become of late almost an object of affection to old Mr. Langholme (*ne dicam alteri*), and he was sorry that the coveted riches had been so suddenly dashed out of his hands. He tried at first to console the young man with commonplace truisms. "It had often happened," Langholme said, with a philosophical air, "that the same

invention had been made by several persons about the same time. The safety-lamp, telegraph, and other useful devices, were 'in the air' before a particular man brought them down, and filled his pocket." Langholme said so again and again, but each time with weaker conviction of its truth. Finally, he left out the last joke, and became very thoughtful for the rest of the day,

The circumstances were suspicious in more than one respect. Phraser and Withers? What should the Mayor of Newstel have to do with a low publican? He did not know that Withers was a step lower than that.

But the next morning, when the young men were standing in the hall, wrapped up in cloaks, preparatory for the journey by coach, Mr. Langholme met them. He had on his long top-coat and thick comforter, and warm fur-lined cap.

He said he was going to accompany them to Newstel. Miss Langholme had not

been willing to dissuade her father, as she thought there were reasons for his taking this step. But she was determined to go with him.

Stockbridge and Hardman continued a few hours longer at Rossleigh.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GENTLEMAN.

Nihil in vultu habituque mutatum.

TACITUS.

THE three gentlemen, in spite of their several grievances, managed to keep up a tolerably animated conversation as the rickety old coach jogged on its diurnal way to Newstel. They had all something against Phraser, yet none of them knew exactly what. Perhaps, after all, they kept thinking, the latter was perfectly innocent of all share in their disasters. For anything that as yet appeared, the Mayor of Newstel might be the most honourable man in that town. There was no doubt that he thought himself so; and if our three gentlemen had any charge to bring against him, it behoved

them to know what it was, and why they made it. Not one of them had in reality any definite charge to bring.

Phraser was in his office when Mr. and Miss Langholme called. Miss Langholme looked particularly charming this morning, the lawyer thought, and he was no mean judge of feminine beauty. The reader would probably have endorsed his opinion; for the reaction of stronger health after the recent accident, and this morning's fresh country air, gave her a pleasant colour, and greater than usual vivacity. Her father had had considerable difficulty in mounting the step to the dingy office, his walk was becoming uncertain, and his eyes were dimmer than they had been.

They found Phraser looking paler and more solemn than was his ordinary wont. He reminded Mary of that morning's gloomy sky. No smiling sun had pierced the clouds. But perhaps her own thoughts were gloomy.

Her father was too unwell to make refined comparisons. Yet it was impossible to mistake the look of fixed determination on Phraser's face. Those scowling eyes meant evil.

The clerk, Hockster, was sitting at the high desk as they entered. He appeared scarcely to notice the visitors, making the very slightest inclination of the head as they appeared. But his countenance too, as even Langholme observed, had a dark and sinister expression. Something was evidently about to happen.

Phraser handed a chair to Miss Langholme. The old man found one for himself.

The lawyer opened the campaign at once. It was better not to give his clients breathing time.

"We are in a curious position, Mr. Langholme," he said. "We are happy, and yet sorry about the information which we have to impart to you."

"Be brief, please."

"The will has reached us, sir."

Langholme's heart seemed to beat against his ribs as he half rose in his chair in the attitude of eager attention.

"But your name is not mentioned, sir."

Phraser said this with a fixed stare at the wall, as if he were a Swiss soldier, and were plucking a handful of lances into his bosom.

"Your name is not mentioned in the will," he repeated.

There was need to repeat the words, for at first Langholme could not credit his ears. But when the full force of the words broke upon his mind, he rose from his chair, and walked half-way across the room. But his tottering steps and excited mind failed to support him. Extending his hand for Phraser's help, he reeled slowly over. His grey head would have been dashed against the floor—neither of the lawyers stirring from his seat—had not Mary, with the speed

of youth, snatched his falling body to her arms. Miss Langholme, oblivious of the presence of any one else, had just time to clasp her father in an almost hysteric embrace. Her fragile form, erected to its full tension, and the old man reposing in turn in his daughter's arms, the girl's lips pressing her father's, and her bright ringlets intertwining with his grey locks, presented a picture such as had never been witnessed in that dark office before, a picture such as an artist would have loved to transfer to his canvas.

Mr. Phraser, however, was not at all impressed either by the beauty or the unusual character of the scene. He coldly rose and said,—

"Allow me, Miss Langholme, to place your father in a chair."

But she shrank from his touch with loathing. She was positively rude to him. She rejected his offer as if he had been some

foul monster. And yet he had done nothing amiss. No charge of rudeness could have been brought against either Phraser or his clerk. Perhaps they could not, had they tried, have reached the old man in time to save him from striking the floor. It was a question of distance. Still allowance ought to be made for Miss Langholme's feelings: it was her father whom she was holding in her arms; and much of his present suffering was, she knew, really on her own account. And it is, in any case, a trying thing to have a fainting burden suddenly thrown into your keeping. In such a case the room seems as if it were suddenly sinking down, and it is no easy task to maintain a composed demeanour. Least of all for a delicate girl. If a feeling of dislike for Phraser had, moreover, to do with declining his proffered assistance, perhaps, finally, Miss Langholme did not understand the dignity of the law, and the respect due to him as its minister.

But the sound of Phraser's voice seemed to restore Langholme to consciousness. Breathing heavily once or twice, he was assisted by Mary to a chair. Then he said, slowly,—

"I am an old man, sir. Pray excuse my feebleness. Allow me to see the will."

"With pleasure, Mr. Langholme. Mr. Hockster, just reach Thomas Walrond's will."

It was in a painted box in a pigeon-hole on the opposite side of the room. The pigeon-holes lined the whole of that side, each being filled with a neat tin box, on which were lettered the initials or names of the persons interested. The box now required was found and unlocked. After a lengthy rumbling among its contents, the will was discovered. Hockster placed it before the lawyer, who handed it to Langholme.

There seemed to be no irregularity about

it. It was written in the same sort of large round handwriting as his own copy. It was duly attested. There was no flaw in the technical language. Phraser had no difficulty in making out the intricate pages and verbose niceties. He almost knew it all by heart. There was therefore no need for Phraser's polite inquiries: "Can I help you, sir?" or "May I explain?" Langholme knew what it all meant. But when he came to the part where his own name ought to have been, he found, as the reader knows, that of Edward Garthwaite.

The will fell from his hands. "Edward Garthwaite," he said; "who the devil is he?"

"I should judge some relative of our client, the late Mr. Walrond, probably in India."

"Oh, indeed." He took the will and read on. He soon came to the words referring, as he knew, to the ward who had once

been under his protection. "If he," the will said, "shall appear, as I have always firmly hoped that he will, such and such things (including Rossleigh) shall go to his possession."

"That refers to the young child who was lost, you know, Mr. Langholme."

The latter sighed. "I do know," he said; "there is no bringing the dead to life."

"There is not. Can we satisfy your curiosity any further, Mr. Langholme, this morning? Time is precious with us."

"How is it that my copy contains my own name?"

"Really, sir, I cannot say," Phraser replied, with a significant glance at Hockster. "I cannot say; but you have not yet done me the favour of showing me the will. Our correspondence with Calcutta will show that *we* have acted honourably."

The last remark Phraser made with an

injured expression. The Mayor of Newstel ought not to be suspected.

There was a letter with the Calcutta post-mark, testifying to the validity of the will, and saying that a copy had been forwarded to Mr. Langholme; but the writers feared it was not the copy of the *last* will that they had sent to Rossleigh. Mr. Walrond had made several wills, and mistake was easy; but Phraser would rectify all.

Phraser watched him read the letter. When he had reached the word "feared" he smiled, and said,—

"Perhaps that explains your difficulty, sir. You have got the wrong copy."

Langholme was blank with astonishment. The wrong copy! That was too bare-faced. And yet, how had Phraser got a letter from Calcutta? A mistake might have happened. Such things had occurred. Langholme's head was too giddy for much

thought. He scarcely knew what he was saying, when he asked,—

"And can I do nothing, then?"

"You can write to Calcutta, sir; but I fear you will have the same answer. I very much fear it," he said, rubbing his hands.

That seemed very probable.

"Or you can contest the will, Mr. Langholme. In that case, you will have to trust *some* lawyer," he said, ironically, "with your much prized copy."

There was nothing more to be said. Mr. Langholme gave a deep sigh. Then he rose, and, solemnly raising his hand, exclaimed,—

"Mr. Phraser, be assured justice will have its due!"

"Oh, certainly, sir; no doubt," was the reply. But Phraser's words were bolder than his countenance as he bowed out his clients.

The latter took their solitary journey down the main thoroughfare of Newstel. It was teeming with crowds, and busy with every kind of energy. But not one face in all the busy throng had a pitying look for the two strangers, sad as their faces betokened them to be. Nor would there have been much pity if their griefs had been laid bare to the thronging populace. Suffering, however great, has to be borne by the few whom it concerns. It cannot weaken itself by diffusion. And the unsympathetic crowd had probably too many troubles of its own to give a thought to Mr. Langholme and his daughter.

When the latter had left the office, Phraser locked the door. Then he rubbed his hands, and winked at Hockster.

"It 's all right," he said.

CHAPTER XVII.

DRY LEAVES.

Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed.
COWPER.

STOCKBRIDGE and Hardman were left at Rossleigh. They had a few hours to spare, and went into the library. Everybody who had a chance did go there. Who would not like to handle once in his life a book which has no fellow in England? And there were several such unique delights in Thomas Walrond's collection. You could easily have put fifty pounds' worth of literature in your waistcoat pocket. And as for beautiful backs, some were so finely bevelled, jewelled, enamelled, and bedizened, that the front of the Houses of Parliament was nowhere beside them. The sweet odour of morocco,

the blaze of artistic bindings, and the knowledge that the books were of real value, made our two friends fond of whiling away a spare hour in Rossleigh library.

A low shelf contained some of the oldest books. Volumes in wood, with brazen edges and clasps, were most of them, and a very formidable look they had.

Hardman had nothing better to do, so he attacked one of these wooden volumes, and laid it upon the green table. It was a book of legends, written in Latin by some long forgotten cleric. Hardman read for some minutes. Then he turned to the old plates. Very curious woodcuts they were. They looked as if a little child had drawn them at an early drawing lesson. After examining these for a while, Hardman suddenly called out,—

"Look here, Stockbridge! Be quick."

Stockbridge was intent on 'Giraldus Cambrensis,' and did not like being dis-

turbed. However, he came, and he was glad he had done so.

"Most curious!" he said.

Then they looked at the window for a full minute. Next they looked at the window and the book alternately. Finally, they looked at one another, and exclaimed, at the same moment,—

"Most curious!"

The window was one of six in the room. Three were of beautiful stained glass, and this was perhaps the prettiest. The colours were of the richest. The deep blue was like cerulean itself, the red was like ruddy wine, the green resembled a clear geranium leaf with the light shining through. And the subject was as quaint as it was beautiful. A valorous knight was contending with a fierce dragon, but, contrary to the usual wont, was being devoured of the same. The goodly man had now but little left of himself. A portion of his legs and part of

his sturdy spear were protruding from the creature's mouth; the rest was in its foul maw.

The very same picture was in the boarded book before Hardman. But the latter had been procured only some thirty years ago, whereas the window was as old as the hall itself.

The legend was intended to typify Conquering by Suffering; it being supposed that the worthy knight's lance, not to speak of his mailed suit, would prove a tough morsel to digest.

The window had always been considered unique. Yet a book, containing the same subject, was almost touched by its colours when the red and blue sunbeam streamed through the panes. It was certainly an odd coincidence.

Hardman was triumphant at his discovery. He almost insulted Stockbridge in his eager, childish joy.

Then he pointed out the various similarities. This was just like that. In fact (do you see?), the two things are the same.

Then he brought down his fist with a bang on the book. That was to be the convincing proof of his cleverness.

But when he had done so he regretted it.

The poor dragon was entirely demolished. The old paper had crumbled like tissue, and the valorous knight's legs alone remained.

Hardman uttered a cry of pain.

"Never heed," replied Stockbridge, "it 's only Suffering that you have destroyed. The valorous knight still lugs his spear-end."

The book was carefully replaced in its shelf. But poor Hardman did not regain his hilarity until he had left Rossleigh far behind.

Stockbridge, however, thought that the ogre Suffering *was* sometimes worsted in the contest; while quiet virtue often managed, in spite of threatening appearances, to get a very fair portion of outward blessings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PATENT.

I was so ill a judge of things, that I could not discover the lenity and favour of this sentence.

SWIFT.

TEN years often elapse before a patent proves lucrative. But the invention of Jonas and Bowyer was just at that time greatly needed. People had for years been looking round for something of the kind, and, when it did come, they were not slow to avail themselves of it. The patent soon brought in money. Phraser and Withers of course shared the profits. They had had an equal hand in the transaction.

But how had Withers learned anything about the invention?

By using his ears, and afterwards his

eyes. Withers was the landlord of "The Three Fiddles." That place was the receptacle for all the news of the neighbourhood. Jonas, being somewhat of a public character, was often discussed by Mr. Withers's friends, who were the more interested in his doings as he was no favourite in their neighbourhood. Bowyer again had made the acquaintance of Withers at an early period of our narrative. The two men could scarcely be putting their heads together without meaning mischief, as Mr. Samuel Withers defined that word. Hence it became a bounden duty, according to the latter's moral code, to bribe Susan the maid, and see what was going on.

Susan's moral code again allowed her to take an odd half-crown from a visitor who went up into a gentleman's room and left a note there. But had poor Susan known what the visitor wanted, she would "probably" have "fetched him a crack on the

side of the head!" she afterwards said. She was a high-spirited lass, and meant it.

The fact remained, nevertheless, that Mr. Withers, who was a shrewd man, had inspected the wonderful invention, which was already being talked about as likely to prove a great thing. Our two friends had been very foolish in not locking up the pretty playthings on their table.

The work had thus been copied. But the worst remains to be told. Withers and Phraser had already had various dealings; into the nature of these it would be as well not to inquire. Gusto Hall, as may be remembered, is a dangerous place for the uninitiated; but Phraser and Withers were well acquainted. The former saw no objection to assisting his friend in obtaining his patent, and in sharing the profits of the same. The chief difficulty in the way came from the great need of haste. Withers had for a time to work night and day; his food

during the while being neat brandy, and his temper worse than fiendish. But while our friends were loitering at Rossleigh the patent was brought out. Money was already flowing in.

Even a small share in the profits would have made any one a rich man.

All these details are doubtless dry enough to the ordinary reader; but patents, it must be remembered, are a source of riches, and have in various respects a considerable influence over life, and the success or failure of one is a matter of some interest. And when it is our hero—a brave and worthy man, albeit a person of faults and failings, and by no means a genuine hero—who has brought out his patent, a little interest is due both to his work and his feelings.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MORNING CALL.

Mane salutantum.

VERG.

BOWYER and Jonas were quite aware that it would be useless to call on Phraser, but they were determined, even if they effected no good thereby, to give the latter a sight of their faces. So to Phraser's office they both went. The lawyer received them with his blandest air; but, after some conversation, he clasped his hands and assumed a look of pious resignation, as a hint of the temper appropriate to his young friends. "He was sorry," he said, "that he did not see the question in their light; but his client, Mr. Withers, was an ingenious mechanic, whose fairly-earned reward it would be unfair to

diminish. His own share in the matter was trifling, thank Heaven."

"It's sharp practice," Jonas said, "to anticipate us by a few days."

"Certainly, sir," he replied; "but events are very capricious."

That was too much! Jonas could stand it no longer.

"It's worse than sharp practice," he said, in tones that were heard in the street; "there's some sheer villainy at the bottom of it!"

What is the expression of a man who is standing behind his enemy in the dark, having a dagger in his hand? The fear and rage in Phraser's grey eye would have become such an one. But he was careful what he said.

"Just take those words down, Mr. Hockster," he remarked, thoughtfully. "You and I will agree in considering them actionable."

The words were taken down.

Jonas was nonplussed. He thought words were only words, and blows blows.

Phraser then assumed a merciful air. Waving his hand, he said,—

"No, gentlemen, I could be severe if I liked; but I shouldn't like to injure either of you—I shouldn't indeed," he said, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his white waistcoat.

"Then the patent is really yours?" Bowyer said, finding words at length.

"Mine? of course it is—"

Bowyer and Jonas exchanged glances, and the lawyer found that he had committed himself.

"That is to say, I have a small share in it. Though why I should tell you I don't know, unless it be that I am grieved at your disappointment, gentlemen. But my share is small, very small indeed."

He pretended not to notice their look of surprise, and continued,—

"But if I may offer our large friend there any advice," he said, with a supercilious glance at Jonas—

"Yes?" said the latter, turning a bold front upon his adversary.

"It would be, never to meddle with patents in future. You 'll find they 'll burn your fingers, gentlemen. Ha! ha!" and he burst into a loud horse-laugh.

"Good morning," Phraser added; seeing his visitors remaining; and he bowed them out.

"He 's a legalized thief! that 's what he is," said Jonas, but in a whisper this time.

Bowyer did not reply. He had expected no better reception. He was chiefly sorry that his own exertions should have helped to fill Phraser's pocket. But the Mayor of Newstel had perhaps greater need of riches than himself. Success to his struggles!

CHAPTER XX.

BUSINESS.

Are you a sensible fellow?
Drawn from Life.

THE time of Newstel's head magistrate was always pretty well occupied, and Mr. Phraser was never an idle man; but now that he had such a splendid chance, he was determined to impress people with an idea of his prowess and energy. What with religious meetings, committee meetings, entertainments, legal business, and illegal struggles for wealth, he had scarcely a vacant hour. Now and then he almost wished he was once more a plain, honest lawyer. It is true that he had by this time attained to considerable influence. His fluency was always welcome in a public assemblage,

and the local press was never weary of singing his praises. But, for all that, he did sometimes feel wearied by his self-imposed yoke of grandeur, and wished himself a man of, at any rate, comparative simplicity and honesty.

And yet there is, to a clever man, great delight in playing a difficult game. Phraser's cards were good, and his head was steady. He relied on a certain luck, which had always attended him, for securing and increasing his winnings. He rather hoped to be made Mayor for the ensuing year. In any case, his winnings were already considerable, and placed, too, in such safe investments (to wit, Respectability and Property), that whatever happened to others, his own position seemed now tolerably well secured.

And so it was: Fortune favours the daring, and Mr. Phraser would continue to receive her favours. He is, probably, still in receipt

thereof. But we must not anticipate, nor have we seen Mr. Phraser very lately; but we should surmise that he is healthy, wealthy, and fully as respectable as ever.

On the morning, however, to which our present chapter refers, he was lolling back easily in his splendid carriage, drawn by two beautiful grey horses, with servants in green livery. Now and then he vouchsafed a word with Hockster, who had been stopping all night at Highton Manor.

And very cheerful Hockster looked, in spite of his employer's haughtiness. The former, probably, enjoyed a stay at the Manor. Everything was charming there.

The carriage stopped at the office-door to set down Hockster. The Mayor was going on to take the chair at a meeting of the Blind Negro Society. The conversation had, therefore, to be finished at the carriage-door.

"In that case," the employer was saying, "you would have to leave."

"Of course."

"And continue to use the new name."

"There would be no difficulty about that?" he asked.

"None whatever; I would arrange it all."

The carriage drove off. Hockster was muttering to himself as he mounted the stairs. He seemed to be talking about "Edward Garthwaite, Esq."

But his own name was Hockster, what had he to do with such a grand name as the former?

CHAPTER XXI.

JONAS STILL LAYS DOWN THE LAW.

There I throw my gage.
SHAKSPEARE.

STRONG language is not taken down in the workshop. There it is rather in request, as with epicures a highly-seasoned dish. And if the auditors of Jonas were somewhat outspoken in their expressions of approval, they had, at any rate, no cutting sayings clothed in neat verbiage. They spoke out there and then, and made an end of it.

The dinner-hour had come. The men were sitting about in various groups. Some were talking, others had begun to untie their provisions.

Jonas had, as usual, a ring of listeners

near him. The latter began to increase as the man's deep, earnest tones were heard.

"There ought to be a summary way of dealing with such fellows," he said.

What sort of fellows he meant seemed to be well understood, for a man answered,—

"Yes; a sort of combat now."

"To be sure. You can fight with a robber who shelters himself under a hedge. And the law ought to be the same sort of hedge; one that doesn't protect rogues."

There was a laugh. Evidently the intricacies of the law had no charm for the work-people. A pale man, in shirt-sleeves, immediately put himself into a fighting attitude, as if desirous of practising on some enemy or other.

"Och!" said a son of Erin, "an' shure the lor's often unlawful!"

"Nay, what I complain of," said Jonas, "is some of them that administer it for us poor ignorant men."

"Or have a throifle of money, mebbe, left now," cried the Irishman, who was determined to have his say.

This raised another laugh, as the speaker had been considered a poor man. But the intricate business of receiving a legacy seemed to be known to him. Legal knots would have met with Alexander's solution had the laughing workmen had their say. Perhaps the laughter would have ceased entirely had Mr. Phraser at that moment adventured himself in the factory.

But he did not, and was not likely to do so. Jonas was glad enough to receive the sympathy of his fellows, who, for their part, were quite as ready to afford it. But when the former had loudly vented his anger, and brought his friends to his own views, he had still to bear his misfortune. And he soon found that this was not at all alleviated either by shouting or gesticulation. In fact, when he had thoroughly vented his feelings,

he felt rather ashamed of himself. His "mates" were but human beings, and, perhaps, were not altogether sorry that their companion had failed to rise so much above their head. People don't like to be distanced.

Jonas began his afternoon's work with a will. At its conclusion, he had done about the amount of three ordinary men. When his weary limbs had reached his home he had almost forgotten his misfortune.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOREBODINGS.

Quid aliud declarant, nisi hominibus ea quæ futura sunt ostendi? CICERO.

MRS. PRITCHERS was not a bit superstitious; at least, she thought she was not. But on the evening of the day when the events of the last chapter occurred, she did feel rather queerish. She drew her little red shawl tightly round herself. And it was not from the cold: a very good fire was blazing in the grate: it was something in that fire which made her feel queer. She looked and looked again into the glowing depths. A thousand horrid faces seemed leering at her from behind cinders, and through cavernous arches of flame; and the same terrible

low
was
What
nough;

had not
it had
darning

"It 's you, Susan, it means," Mrs. Pritchers remarked, with an air of resignation.

Then, seeing the girl's look of alarm, she compassionately added,—

"Or them that your friends know, perhaps. It may be only some one as your friends know, Susan."

Susan thought so too. That put the matter off indefinitely.

But Mrs. Pritchers did not like the look of things. Susan had scalded the crickets to death lately—something always happened to people who did that; and one of the lodgers, she did not see which, had tumbled downstairs this morning—that was a bad sign. And, worst of all, the old eight-day Dutch clock in the corner, that had gone for twenty-five years, had stopped this afternoon. The well-known tic-tac was silent in the kitchen. Something would happen, there could be no doubt.

Foolish thoughts, certainly, and quite unworthy of recording in a serious work of fiction; but elderly ladies do, it must be admitted, sometimes get odd fancies into their heads.

And, after all, into the minds of each and all of us there often comes the thought of that one great event which casts its backward shadow on all our doings. What wonder if, in solitary hours, even trifling matters serve as reminders of something really important? People are not all narrow-minded who do not think as we do. Has not human life been called a seventy years' clock? Why, then, should not the stopping of an eight-day clock be to some significant?

The hollow croaking of a raven over a deep pine-wood at midnight may have a real language for the benighted traveller. It may suggest deep thoughts which will not be excluded.

Mrs. Pritchers, at any rate, fell into a

reverie, and went to bed supperless. Mr. Pritchers had been a good deal in her mind to-night; and she had thought of the grassy tombstone. When she held up the candle, her eyes looked red.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LOST.

Far in the depths of forest reach
At midnight gloom they went,
No sign of life, no sound of speech,
To guide their feet's intent.

ANON.

THAT very night, as it happened, there *were* two night-foundered travellers within a deep pine-wood. The wind was rustling in the branches, and they could just hear the distant rush of waters in their rugged torrent beds. Three or four ravens, disturbed by the unusual sound of footsteps, were cawing overhead with startling hoarseness.

The two strangers were Stockbridge and Hardman, who were seeking the nearest way to Rossleigh. They were in pressing haste;

an hour or two might make a great difference to them.

Langholme was ill, and had sent for them. It was very tantalizing to have lost their way just when the moon had become obscured. The two gentlemen kept dashing against the briar-hedges and yielding saplings, or losing themselves in marshy ground; now and then a sharp thorn would pierce the feet of one or the other. And all this time Langholme was lying ill and wanting them. It was indeed tantalizing. They wished now that they had taken a carriage, and gone by road.

But the moon shone again. They had wandered quite out of the path, and were apparently in a wilderness of briars. The ravens were croaking still. The branches bent and cracked as the two friends made desperate efforts to free themselves; but the quickset encompassed them like a thick wall. The moon soon grew dim,

and they were in no better position than before.

To find a path was hopeless. They had wandered hundreds of yards from it. They could only use their voices; but there was no house for many miles. Still they could try. It seemed their only hope.

They shouted singly and together. The echoes of the old wood were awakened; the birds rose from their nests, and eddied over their heads; but there was no response. The men were exhausted, and gave up the struggle.

They sat down, and poor Mr. Hardman's face was very blank indeed. His companion thought awhile, and then suddenly cried out,—

"We shall be out in five minutes."

He was an active man, and had soon climbed the lofty fir-tree close at hand. Thence he hoped to see over the other trees, and discover the traces of the lost path.

But there was still no path visible. He saw, however, what pleased him as well: there was a bright light at about a mile's distance.

He noted the direction carefully. Then, in company with Hardman, he tried to make for it. But that was no easy task. The branches on that side were the thickest they had as yet encountered, and the briars were the sharpest.

But even these began to yield to sturdy effort. By climbing some trees, getting beneath the boughs of others, and manfully crushing down lesser obstacles, the two gentlemen were in five minutes on better ground. Very soon they came upon a sort of path, but a very curious one. It led directly to a piece of marshy land, where it was lost. They had, therefore, to skirt the edge of the treacherous ground. But that done, they found at last a well-defined walk, and, the moon re-appearing, they had

no longer any difficulty in reaching the source of the light.

This proceeded from a fire in the open air. Two poles held a camp-kettle in the blaze, and swarthy faces were to be seen engaged in loud converse and riotous enjoyment.

It was the gipsy encampment which had lately removed from Rossleigh. They gave the strangers a cold welcome.

"Which was the way to Rossleigh?" Stockbridge inquired.

A whispered conversation between two gipsies ensued, and, for a while, there was no response. Our friend had to repeat his question in an angrier tone; and even then there was a shake of dissent, and a nod between the two gipsies before he received any answer.

They must turn to the right. Some two miles away was a turn to the left that would lead them directly to the Grange.

"It was the Grange their honours wanted, was it?" asked the gipsy spokesman, curiously.

Stockbridge simply thanked him, without answering his question.

The two gentlemen took the track along which they were directed. It was an easy path, and they had no difficulty in finding their way. But they must have gone at least three miles and a half before a turn appeared. Was that the right way?

They took it, at any rate. But every step was bearing them further away from Rossleigh; and when the grey morning broke through the trees, our friends were still on foot.

For themselves they cared but little, though they were weary, faint, and foot-sore. But their friend Langholme was ill. Perhaps, they kept thinking, he might be even on his death-bed, while they were still away. The colour mounted to their cheeks with shame and remorse.

It took them two hours longer to gain the turnpike, and then they found themselves nearer to Newstel than Rossleigh. Thus their night's travelling had proved wasted labour.

But they were anxious to get there at once, and started by the first carriage they met with. If the earnest reader feels half their interest in old Mr. Langholme, he too, without using a book-mark here, will start at once for the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE INEVITABLE.

A meek man and a brave.
WORDSWORTH.

It seemed as if the great event was overhanging Langholme. When the latter reached home after his interview with Phraser, he had felt far from well. That fainting in the office had proved a severe shock to his aged system. In fact, a slight attack of paralysis had followed.

It was with great difficulty that he had laboured up the hill to Rossleigh. More than once he had to stand, or lean against the fence-walls which there bound the fields.

At home he sat down in the hall, and looked again at his darling pictures. Their

venerable forms and energetic features were indeed refreshing after the scowling or commonplace looks he had seen in Newstel. But pictures could not console an aching mind and wearied body. Mr. Langholme sat in his large oaken chair, and Mary, on a stool at his feet, saw, with alarm, that he was suffering far more than he expressed.

No wonder that harrowing thoughts passed through his mind. Phraser, a guest and trusted friend, who had succeeded almost without examination to the charge of his and Walrond's affairs, had—could he deny it?—shamefully abused his position.

Phraser's impudent manner this morning had left no doubt of it. And there were doubtless legal technicalities under which he sheltered himself; or, at any rate, there were tricks with which an old man could not grapple. Phraser would never have dared his villainy had he not despised him as an infirm old man. Langholme pressed

his hand to his brow as he thought that he was worn-out and despised!

The house and home, too, which had seen most of his hopes and struggles, would have to be abandoned; and he, who had lived in comparative affluence, would become a poor man. It is no easy thing to begin life afresh, with hoary locks for companions.

Mary was playing with the little white lap-dog. All at once Langholme began to watch her nimble motions. He showed in the trifling circumstance all the eager interest of a child, and for the time had quite forgotten his train of thought. For several minutes he seemed unconscious of everything except the dog and Mary.

Then his brain began to whirl again. Yes, it was Mary that he was really anxious about. What did his griefs matter?—they would soon be over. But what would Mary do when a stranger had seized the old hall?

How he blamed himself for not making better provision! His savings had been almost entirely expended in worthless books and parchments. And this was his reward!

Then he would look round on the old hall, with its portraits, and his daughter there, as quiet and gentle as one of them, and fancy that he was still master there. Nothing had happened, it was all delusion on his part. Then the sense of the blow returned with double force.

No, he could not get rid of his pain; it followed him about—it was stronger than he; it peered out from the walls, it came in the sleepless hours.

He walked about sad and disconsolate. Why had he not made provision for his daughter?

If Mr. Phraser could have beheld him slowly pacing about, he would have felt a twinge of compassion or remorse. To see

an old man beat his breast for no fault of his own is disturbing.

For long hours together Langholme would refuse to be comforted. Then he would for a while cease mourning, arrested by the loving glance of Mary, who followed him to and fro with ceaseless anxiety. Her eyes seemed to the old man as soothing as the loving glance of an angel, and he would for a short time rest from sorrowing, soon to begin again with intenser pain.

There is no escaping mental pain, it follows everywhere. Happy when it ends in a blow that prostrates the body, if the mind be left in peace!

The final blow came to Langholme before his friends expected it. For some time he had not been able to bear Mary out of his sight a moment. When she was with him, he was sad; but when she was away, all was dark as night.

And yet the sight of her calm, sweet face

probably intensified the severity of his pain. It reminded him that she would some time be alone in the world—alone, by his carelessness!—alone with tricksters and thieves! —a sheep among wolves!

The old man's incessant anxiety was at last too much for his over-wrought frame. The paralytic attack was repeated with great severity.

Langholme was now, of course, confined to his bed. But the doctors gave hopes of recovery. With the help of good care and good support his years might be prolonged.

But good support will not minister to a mind diseased, and Langholme became weaker and weaker, in spite of the best attention.

By this time Stockbridge and Hardman had reached him. They were quite unprepared for the sight of failing nature and utter prostration which met their eyes. But it was chiefly physical suffering then, and

they could do little to relieve that. They talked, however, now and then, so that the sick man could overhear them, about earlier days and friendships; and Langholme would listen with a pleased smile.

Then for days together he seemed stronger. The doctors might be right, after all. He really did look as if he would recover. On such occasions he would try to resume his earlier pursuits.

"Ah! those naughty books," said Hardman; "he doesn't really think it was wasted money that he spent on them!"

The old man would listen for hours to favourite passages from poets and orators and philosophers. Those pieces which had cheered his earlier hours, did not refuse consolation at this time of failing strength. The old man smiled, and whispered to himself, as some well-known bit was read to him.

Not that he strengthened his hopes by

these beloved pieces. They were firmly fixed already. But the toils which had occupied his youth and manhood had not to be cast aside now that he was lying prostrate with sickness. He would lie perfectly still, repeating the words of his darling authors. They were all filled, to his mind, with a higher meaning, which rendered them truly Christian.

But at last even these playthings were put aside. He became more sober, and had quite given up his former self-accusations. Some passage of Pascal's 'Pensées,' or of higher writ still, would be on his lips, and his eyes would be radiant with his inward thought.

Then his friends gathered around him cheerfully, knowing that his own mind was cheerful. But they were full of thought and wonder at the words of wisdom which fell from his lips. So gentle and sweet they were, that his friends compared them to the

taste of honey. All that was harsh and bitter seemed to have passed away from him.

He lay thus calmly for weeks. His friends went and returned. Christmas came. The bells poured their sad strain into his chamber; but it was not sad to him.

When the last day of the year arrived, there came, not an alteration in his state, but no less a person than Mr. Phraser.

Several motives had induced the lawyer to come; but among these was not the desire to do justice to the dying man; in fact, he was not aware of the entire separation which had taken place between Langholme and himself. As to its being his own evil deeds which had caused Langholme's illness, he never gave that a thought. He supposed that Langholme was breaking-up from the effect of age. He would therefore wish to see his lawyer. The latter would probably do a stroke of business.

Langholme's friends were at first for

ordering the lawyer off at once. Then they thought he might have come to make some amends. But when the sick man heard of his arrival, he showed a feverish eagerness to see him. And a long interview ensued. The two men must have spent three hours without a witness. When Phraser left the room, a cold perspiration stood on his brow. But his farewell to the friends below was almost more polite than ever. You would have thought that he had made six-and-eightpence at the least.

That was the only event which happened about this time.

The new year came. The merry chimes were sadder still. His friends knew that he would not be with them long. Not much of the new year would Langholme see.

At last he bade farewell to the faithful companions of his later days. It was a sad parting. Stockbridge and Hardman gave way completely, and sobbed like children,

as they slowly descended the old hall stairs.

The village clock struck three. They could hear it distinctly in the early morning. The two men sat down in the hall, and covered their faces with their hands. Langholme the scholar—they had seen his face for the last time. He would speak to them no more. His work was done.

Then all was silent. For a long half-hour not a sound was heard save the moaning of the elms outside.

The companions were buried in their own thoughts.

Of a sudden there came a sound from the sick man's chamber. It was, as it were, a chorus of angelic music. It thrilled the two friends to the heart. It seemed to hover above the lofty hall, and to pass into the old rooms, and to fill the very nooks and corners, till the whole mansion was overflowing with the glorious harmony. How beautiful it

sounded!—how spiritual were its suggestions! The very words became audible. A voice was singing, to a simple melody, the song of saints:—

> "Dies iræ, dies illa
> Solvet sæclum in favillâ,
> Teste David cum Sibyllâ."

It was Mary playing to her dying father one of the grandest hymns of the Christian Church. But there seemed more of heaven than of earth in her strains, as they broke the deep stillness of the early morning. Soft and distinct came each single word. It was indeed an angel's song. At length the daughter's awe-stricken voice was blending itself with the sad but hopeful music of the sweet words, "Dona eis requiem." And as the last "Amen" rang through the hall, the spirit of Langholme passed away.

CHAPTER XXV.

COMMENTS.

Like tones, oh! never to be heard again.
ANON.

POOR Mrs. Pritchers was right after all: something had "ailed" some one after those coals had fallen from the fire; and, to do her justice, her New Year's merriment was of a sombre cast, owing to her regret that Squire Langholme was no more.

The niece Jane, now rosier and prettier than ever, was stopping with her, and Mrs. Rhodes had casually dropped in again; but a gloom seemed to be thrown over the proceedings. And yet the fire was nice and warm, and the cups and saucers were sparkling in the bright blaze, and the cold snowflakes falling outside the window peeped

through the panes, as if they would have liked to step in and warm themselves.

But the ladies felt little comfort from the bounties around. Even Susan's usually sprightly face seemed dark and mopish.

There was a whimper in Mrs. Rhodes's voice, as she said,—

"Eh! it's a pity, though; for he was a nice, good gentleman."

"No doubt of it," the hostess replied. "No doubt of it. But it's what we must all come to some day."

This was rather too close an application for Mrs. Rhodes, who quietly observed,—

"But you and I, you know, are still young."

And she gazed at her portly figure.

"To be sure! And who'll get the old gentleman's money? He must have been worth a mine of gold."

Mrs. Rhodes did not know. Susan had, therefore, to answer inquiries. The maid

was rather bashful before Mrs. Rhodes, for the latter had several times caught her in Mr. Grigthorpe's company. The ladies soon began to feel angry, as the girl had not much to tell them. They shouted and scolded, but Susan had only one reply,—

"It had always belonged to Mr. Phraser, the Mayor, m'm, you know!"

How the girl had got hold of this partly true and partly false account is uncertain. Perhaps it was the story current in the village of Rossleigh, where was Susan's home; and ill news flies apace. Anyhow, nothing further was to be elicited from her. At last Mrs. Pritchers angrily exclaimed,—

"Well, if it's his, may he have the luck of it!"

That remark was intended for deep sarcasm. Mrs. Pritchers did not really believe that Phraser could be owner of Rossleigh; but there was more sense in her words than she supposed.

Jane had scarcely spoken since some talk the aunt had had with her about "poor Mary Clifford." She had been rebuked for her "childish ignorance" about things in general, and had afterwards listened in silence.

As the ladies conversed, the gloom of their minds was gradually dissipated; and when at length they separated, they had come to a wise conclusion: there was a right way and a wrong way of regarding everything; Mr. Langholme was an old man, and it was just as well that he couldn't take his riches with him. Perhaps they were right.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GUSTO HALL.

It was a merry company.

HOOD.

THE January nights were colder than usual this year. Snow, snow was everywhere—it was in the sky, on the ground, in your eyes, and inside your very waistcoat. And every now and then a violent blast of wind kept sweeping round the corner, scattering the hardened flakes in the frozen faces of the few passers-by. The noiseless wheels moved with a weird silence in the deep drifts upon the roads. Business was done by half-past eight; and all good people were at home with their wives and families.

Occasionally a homeless little boy crept along the street, or stopped and stamped on

the hardened mass of white, to keep his toes warm. But it was not easy to do that to-night, even with good thick boots; and without them—oh! do not let us think about the chilblains! And how dark it was! Not a glimpse of the moon. The stars, too, were hidden by deep cloud-banks, and the very gas-lamps refused their light, so intense was the frost. It was a pitchy darkness.

All was dismal, chill, and melancholy.

But even a blank, cold night, has its uses; it serves very well for a deed of darkness. Perhaps that was the reason why Withers and two companions had chosen it for an enterprise.

Eight o'clock had struck from the big steeples. Just then three men were slinking along the narrowest lanes, through the very thickest snow-drifts, to their old meeting-place. This was Gusto Hall.

They had reached the lane at length.

They were going to clear the snow from the pavement. Withers was in the act of making the appointed sign, when—was that a man across the lane? Yes; some one was watching them.

That was certainly awkward. Some one who knew their whereabouts it must have been, or he would not have come out this freezing night. The enterprise had been appointed for to-night—to-night, by fair means or foul, they must contrive to meet in the hall below.

They left the lane as stealthily as they had entered; then they held a short whispered conversation.

At the other side of the tannery where they were standing flowed a black stream—a very black stream it was always, for it turned the wheels and received the washings of the factories. The water was in constant motion, and had not been frozen over.

All was still for ten minutes; then the

plash of oars might have been heard—it was a boat being rowed down the river. Within it were the three comrades; they disappeared through an opening in the wall.

They had entered a passage connecting the river with the hall. There was a challenge and a quick retort, and they passed on. All was then quiet for about an hour and a half.

At the end of that time the three men reappeared; two others were with them. All five threw themselves into the boat; firearms were handed by the sentry, some parting words were exchanged, and the oars again struck the water.

Weirs and ponds prevented any long passage; but the boat was rowed higher up the stream than the place whence it had started. It was soon moored to one of the arches of a bridge.

The five men took a cautious glance at their arms. Then they stole with apparent

ease through a labyrinth of lanes. Here and there they came across men smoking at their house-doors or leaving a public-house. A few words of strange "lingo" sufficed to make such fellows turn their heads another way.

In this manner they had soon left the town behind. They could now draw closer together—there was no danger of being caught. Two of them had dark lanterns; but there would probably be no passengers along the whole way.

Withers had just laughed a cruel short laugh.

But what was that behind them? It moved rapidly and noiselessly through the darkness. Three lamps of fire were advancing through the thick gloom!

In front loomed a terrible figure, glaring with red light.

The men sank into the hedge-bottom. It had now come close to them.

Oh! it was only a gipsy cart, which was to meet them at the next village. It was a little before its time.

So much alarm about that! The cart had six windows, three on each side, and in the distance these did look like fire-balls. Withers gave a low whistle. The cart slackened its speed. He gave another. Then he was answered by the driver. The latter's tall figure had stood out like a giant's in front of the approaching light.

All seemed right. The five men approached the cart, and entered into conversation with the man. They would meet him again further on the road. Would they, he asked, let him drive them?

No; they were stillbent on going round by the hill, lest their steps might be dogged. Over such a deed as theirs they could not be too careful.

The cart drove off. Conversation soon

ceased; the deep darkness threw a gloom over the spirits of these bold men.

For three miles there was silence. It was broken only by the noise of footsteps on the hardened ruts, or a deep curse as any one fell into the drifting snow.

Then they came to a brawling stream. What a hideous noise it made as it roared over the rocks! Here they consulted again.

There was an inn close to the stream, and bearing its name. Some of its rooms were still well lighted, and threw a bright gleam exactly in the way of the men. Sounds of merriment were heard from within.

It was impossible to pass in front of the house. Let them be once discovered, and their scheme would be disconcerted. They would have to make a circuit. This would be tedious, and perhaps dangerous in the snow; but, luckily, Withers knew the country well.

But the latter did not know the road as

well as he fancied. Once he quite lost himself. Another time a mastiff barked in a farm-yard. The house-door was opened. The men had to lie still under the hedge. Withers dropped something here without noticing it. He would afterwards regret the loss.

At last they had reached the summit of the hill. The night was no longer pitchy black; once or twice the moon shone through masses of cloud.

And what a sight was revealed!

Just above the heads of the five men was a lofty piece of woodwork, with something attached. It seemed to chatter to the night breeze like a crazy maniac. It was the old gibbet, with its iron chains remaining.

Three hundred yards below stood a ruined cottage. One of the men said it was lighted up.

And the blank expanse of moorland was wild enough at any time; but now that its

rough crags and deep hollows were covered with a white shroud, it looked really horrible.

Nowhere was there sign of life. Even the distant cottage now seemed quite dark. The man must have been mistaken.

But yet there did seem, on looking back, to be a fitful glare about that cottage. Could it be a Will-o'-the-wisp? The ground there might still be damp.

But, look! What was that they saw as they were descending the hill? Something was going on beneath that large tree! What was it? Each man asked himself the question in breathless suspense.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHAT?

Tam subito periisse videns tam digna manere.
COWPER.

IT was nearly one o'clock A.M.

At this very moment a handsome young lady was talking to a gentleman in a familiar and loving tone. So loving and gentle were her words, that her sweetheart might have been about to leave for ever.

It was a lofty room, blazing with the waxen lights of many chandeliers. Several fire-places threw out a warm glow of heat. Works of art were strewn about. Gorgeous pictures adorned the walls. Two pianos were open, as if they had been lately used; the music was lying about the floor.

The guests had gone; there was no one in the room but the two young people.

From time to time the gentleman placed his arm affectionately round the neck of his *affiancée*,—for such she must have been,—and whispered something into her ear, too sweet, apparently, for the ordinary voice to utter.

And the lady returned his affection with a fond, loving glance, which seemed to say,—"You are all in the world to me. I will give up all for you."

At length the gentleman had to return through the cold Newstel streets. The lady retired to rest and dream of love and its reward.

The two persons have already appeared in our narrative. Their present conduct will be solved in due course.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SURPRISE.

O hell! what have we here?

SHAKSPEARE.

UNDER the large tree, now scarcely thirty yards distant, the next moonbeam showed to our companions an advancing figure. There it was, as large as life.

The men hid themselves at the sides of the pathway. One of them mounted a small crag. He boldly directed his lantern upon the moving object.

They began to wish they had not taken that way.

The figure resembled a feeble old man. He had pale features and long, thin arms. Cold as it was, he had but little upper

raiment on. He seemed to be talking and gesticulating beneath the bare tree. For a while he was stationary. Soon he resumed his movement. Again he broke out into eager conversation. Then, with a loud yell, he raised a despairing face to the black heaven.

It must, surely, be a human being. But some of the men had doubts about that. They would have to pass straight in his course.

There was no avoiding him now. He had caught sight of the lantern, and was approaching.

The men's knees knocked together. The figure's eyes were wild and staring. His hair was floating on the night breeze.

Withers alone did not quail. He felt for his loaded pistol. But he had dropped it under the farm-wall.

He had to borrow one. He drew the trigger, but it did not go off.

The figure approached. The men durst not stir a limb. It came to the very place where they lay crouching.

Then it looked round, uttering some unintelligible words. How the ruffians trembled!

Then, without further notice, it walked straight along the path by which they had already come. The man, if such he was, seemed to disappear within the cottage which they had before noticed.

The men still dared not move. Their limbs were becoming stiff. Once let them yield to sleep, and it would be all over with them.

But the cottage had been dark for some time. There was no longer anything to be seen. One by one the men felt rather ashamed of themselves. They must have been the victims of some delusion.

But it was an "uncanny" circumstance, and augured badly for their undertaking.

However, they resumed the journey. They had only the hill to descend, before they would meet the waggon again.

Without further adventure the men reached the foot of the hill. The bridge was at the bottom.

The water of the stream was frozen about the rushes and banks. The white patches of ice had a ghastly look beneath the occasional moonbeam: they reminded Withers of pale mariners lying dead upon a reeking deck.

But the gipsy waggon dispersed such thoughts. It was there waiting.

The windows of the waggon were covered with shutters, so that the inmates might not be noticed. Two men joined Withers, with some iron implements in their hands.

Not a word was uttered. The men ascended the hill, making a wide circuit of the small village which lay in their road.

In half-an-hour's time they found themselves before a large gate. They climbed the wall, and found before them a black mass, blacker than the clouds above. A tower and battlemented roof loomed grandly, when the moon shone.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SOLITUDE.

Night for the dreams of sleep, the voice of prayer.
MRS. HEMANS.

GRIEF coming in its intensity stuns at first. Upon Mary Langholme there had come, within a few days, her father's death and the certainty of her own poverty. Both were hard to bear. Yet she had been civil to Phraser when he had called again. He was acting for the new owner, Edward Garthwaite, he said.

There was no show at the funeral. The villagers were present to a man; and there was not one who did not shed tears for

Miss Langholme. She looked so unearthly and beautiful, they thought, in her mourning robes. His friends laid him beneath his darling yew-tree.

Mary bore up bravely. She gave directions, and made arrangements. She had enough strength of mind to enter into particulars with Phraser. The latter offered to obtain for her a comfortable situation. She politely declined it.

Stockbridge was too thoughtful to make himself officious. At the earliest opportunity Hardman and himself departed.

Mary was therefore left to herself. The servants would not quit their mistress, and remained with her from affection.

A sense of desolation now overwhelmed the poor girl indeed. No longer obliged to exert herself by giving directions, or maintaining self-command, she began to sink into blank and utter sadness.

What else could be expected of a girl of

twenty? She might indeed feel desolate, bereft of her father, and left to herself, without friend or adviser, in that dreary Hall. Dreary most in the rooms that her father had most loved.

No wonder if at times her imagination became excited under the overpowering feeling of her loneliness.

Miss Langholme had never felt more desolate than on the evening to which this chapter refers. The servants had retired as usual. No one was awake in the house but herself.

The howling blast swept round the mansion. It rattled against the casements. It tossed the snow against the window-panes. It banged about the arms of the great elms.

Then all was still. Not a sound was to be heard through the old building. Had a solitary maiden ever been alone before in that mansion with such a roaring tem-

pest? How the trees fumed and fretted without!

Hush! the fierce blast seemed to have entered the building itself. The walls were shrieking, as if the spirits of long-departed ancestors were holding converse with one another.

All at once a terrible crash echoed through the deep cellars and dungeons below.

But hark! What was that?

A slow, regular step was passing up the old oak stairs. It reached the landing.

Mary was almost fainting.

It came onwards to her door. Then it turned back, and descended as slowly as it had mounted.

All was still again. Mary heard the dripping of water in the deep well beneath the stairs.

There were several intervals of deep

stillness, soon to be followed by renewed outbursts of the storm.

Mary could bear no longer the suggestions of her own thoughts. She opened the room-door.

The sudden entrance of cold air extinguished her lamp, and she was left in darkness.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LIGHT EXTINGUISHED.

Sights of woe.
MILTON.

MISS LANGHOLME, unfortunately, had not with her the means of rekindling her lamp.

Brave girl as she was, for some moments she shrank from passing along the dark corridor to the room at the end, where she could renew her light. It was a very small room, furnished with such utensils as are wanted for lamps in a country household.

When she got there she could not believe her eyes.

Intense fear alone prevented her from swooning.

The room, being scarcely visible from the garden, had never been furnished with blinds. It overlooked the little chapel at the extremity of the Grange.

Mary had no difficulty in seeing into this building.

It was most brilliantly illuminated.

Mary had hardly the calmness left to ask herself what it meant.

But it could not be fire. The domestics avoided the chapel with superstitious fear. Nor was there any smell of fire.

Mary looked again. Dark shadows crossed the light. They were figures. On listening intently, she thought she could discern voices.

By this time she had rekindled her lamp.

But what was that? It was a loud crash, just as if a heavy crowbar were being propelled against a door.

Now she remembered it all. The blood

rushed to her temples as she thought of it. There was a door long disused and nailed up: it admitted to a sloping passage, which itself communicated with the chapel. A small ladder would be needed to reach the passage below. Then the ascent was easy to the trap-door.

It was close to the Red Room, where her father had kept all his valuables.

Mary rushed from the room to give the alarm. But it was too late. Scarcely had she set foot in the passage, when she was compelled to retire. The boarding broke with a tremendous crash, and heavy steps tramped along the corridor.

It was fortunate that she had just time to turn the key.

From its retired position, however, the little room in which she had ensconced herself was unnoticed.

The seven men who had entered broke

into one room after another, including the one which she had just left.

Several gathered before the door of the Red Room, which was most strongly protected. That, too, gave way, but not without much resistance.

The iron safe, with its valuable papers, was before them.

It contained the copy of Walrond's will.

That was what the men wanted.

At this moment, after an ineffectual search, one or two more came to the Red Room.

"The bird's flown," they said.

"Never heed; the nest's here," was the answer.

The whole seven men set to work in earnest.

They hammered blow after blow upon the large old-fashioned chest; but it refused to give way. It could be removed bodily.

Its weight not being as great as appeared, it could be let down upon the snow beneath.

The safe was soon detached from the wall. Cords formed of carpets were used for the lowering.

It had just touched the snow when a sharp cry was heard.

The inmates ought to have been gagged over-awed. It was they who were giving an alarm.

Withers threatened to set the house on fire.

But an answering shout was heard.

Help seemed at hand. The men would now be occupied in defending the captured safe.

The first to reach it were the two gipsies.

But they were struck so violently that they were hurled to the ground.

The five advanced in some disorder. They did not know where or in what force

the enemy were. The latter did not give any token of its numbers.

By degrees the five men seemed to gain upon their adversaries. They advanced with a charge. Some one fell. No more resistance appeared to be offered, and the safe was now taken on their shoulders. The two wounded comrades were left where they fell.

The five men descended the walk with their burden. Again there was a violent charge. Four of them fell to the ground. Withers alone kept his feet.

This time the latter's pistol took effect.

The enemy, who was then but one man, fell to the ground.

The safe was now taken outside the gates. There the waggon was waiting for it. It soon reached Newstel.

The intelligent reader will guess the part of Newstel to which it was conveyed.

The lingering dawn came at last. It discovered to the servants of Rossleigh three bodies.

Two were gipsies.

The third was Jonas.

END OF VOL. II.

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